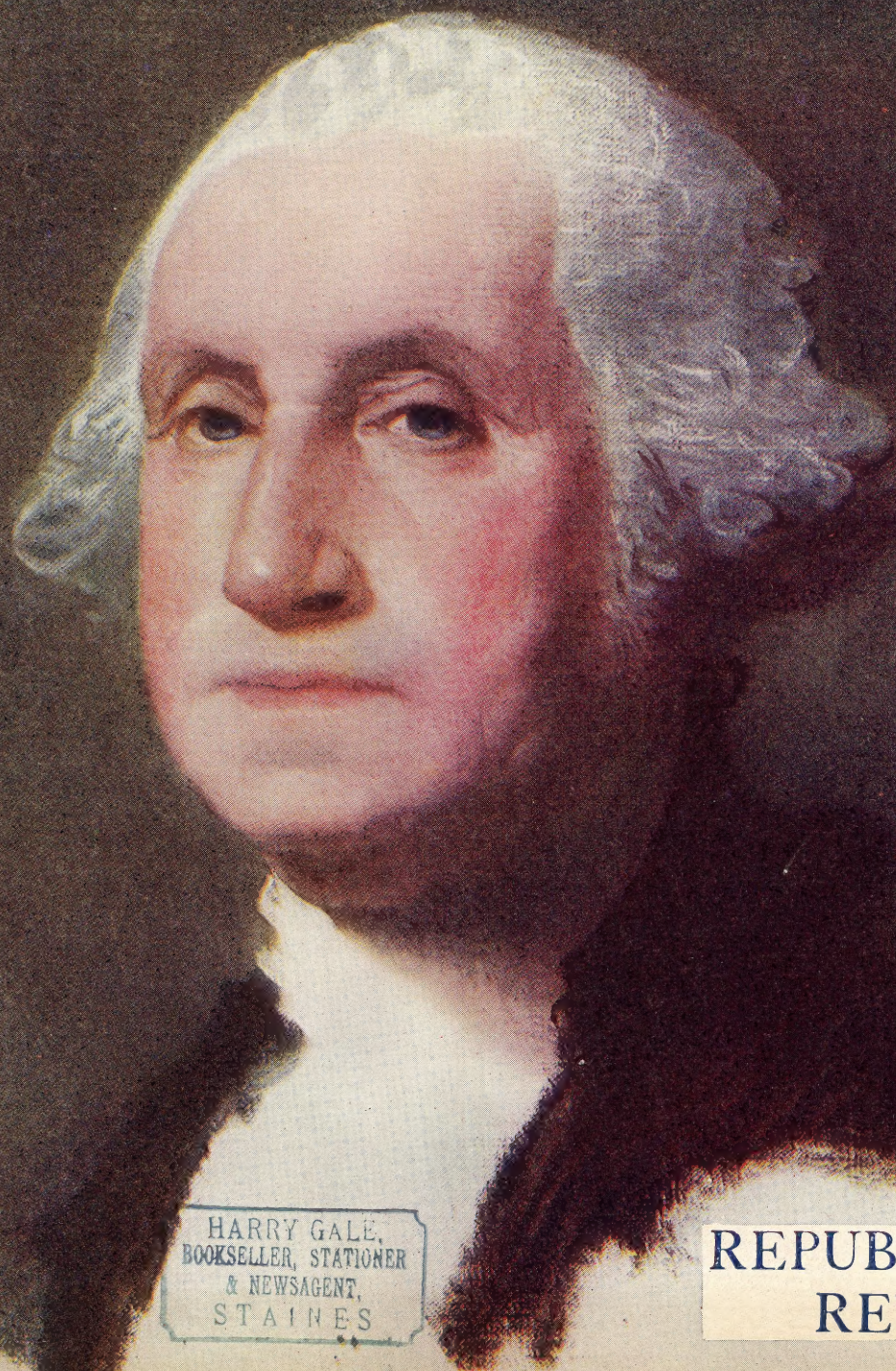


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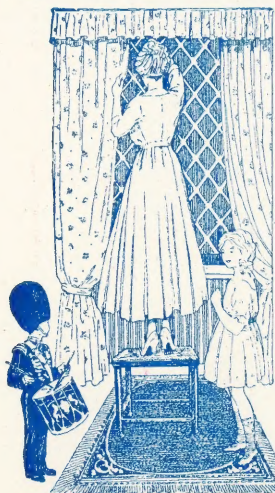
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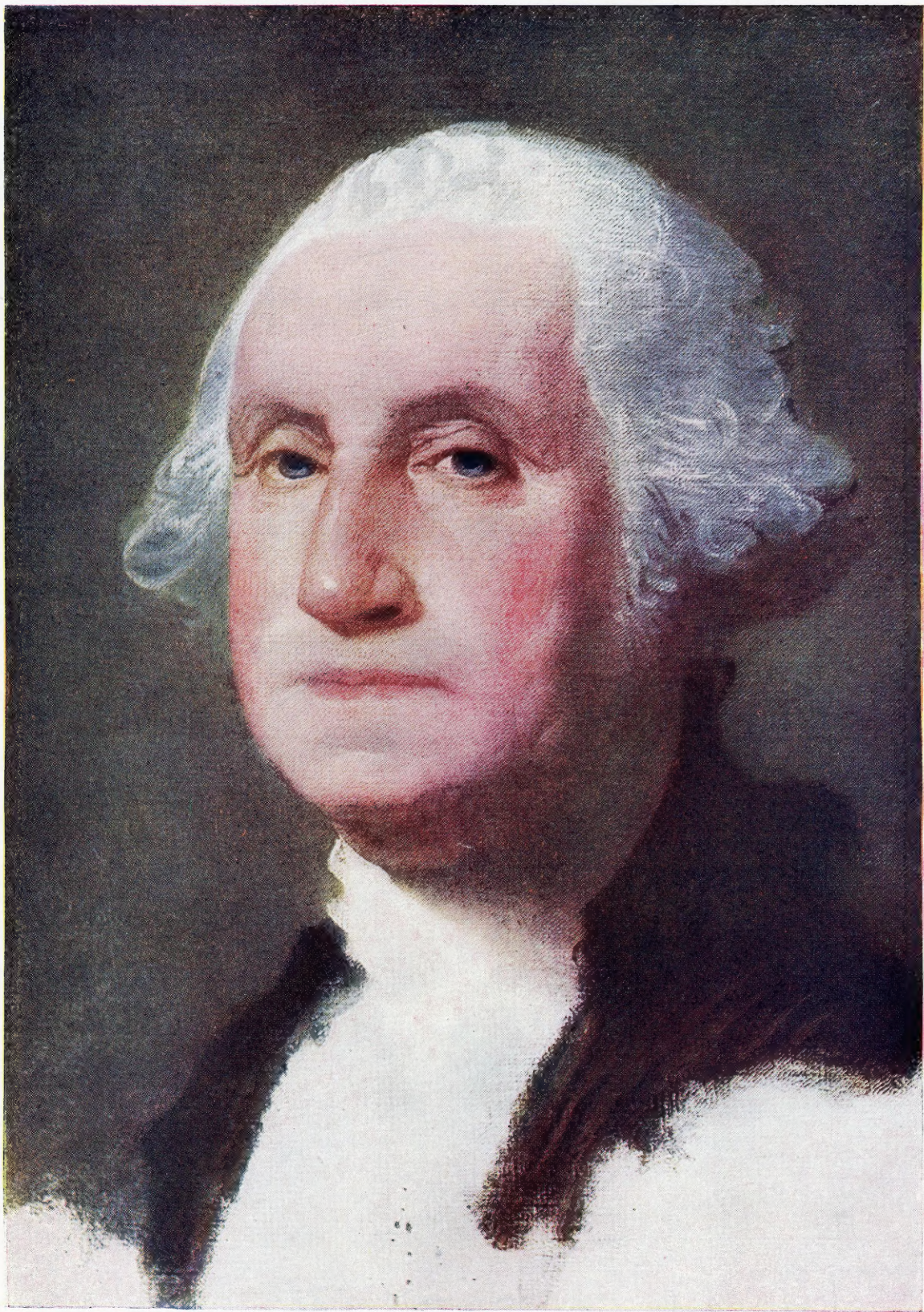
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GEORGE WASHINGTON.

From the portrait by Gilbert Stuart at Boston, U.S.A.



real beginnings of Virginia date from the foundation of the Virginia Company in 1606 in the reign of James I (1603-25). The story of John Smith and the early founders of Virginia, and of how the Indian "princess" Pocahontas married one of his gentlemen, is an English classic.<sup>1</sup> In growing tobacco the Virginians found the beginning of prosperity.

At the same time that the Virginian Company was founded, the Plymouth Company obtained a charter for the settlement of the country to the north of Long Island Sound, to which the English laid claim. But it was only in 1620 that the northern region began to be settled, and that under fresh charters. The settlers of the northern region (New England), which became Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, were men of

a different stamp to the Virginia people. They were Protestants discontented with the Anglican Church compromise, and republican-spirited men hopeless of resistance to the Grand Monarchy of James I and Charles I. Their pioneer ship was the *Mayflower*, which founded New Plymouth in 1620. The dominant northern colony was Massachusetts. Differences in religious method and in ideas of toleration led to the separation of the three other Puritan colonies from Massachusetts. It illustrates the scale upon which things were done in those days that the whole state of New Hampshire was claimed as belonging to a certain Captain John Mason, and that he offered to sell it to the king (King Charles II) in 1671 in exchange for the right to import 300 tons of French wine free of duty—an offer which was refused. The present state of Maine was bought by Massachusetts from its alleged owner for twelve hundred and fifty pounds.

In the Civil War that ended with the decapitation of Charles I the sympathies of New

England were for the Parliament, and Virginia was Cavalier; but two hundred and fifty miles separated these settlements, and there were no serious hostilities. With the return of the monarchy in 1660, there was a vigorous development of British colonization in America. Charles II and his associates were greedy for gain, and the British crown had no wish to make

any further experiments in illegal taxation at home. But the undefined relations of the colonies to the crown and the British government seemed to afford promise of financial adventure across the Atlantic. There was a rapid development of plantations and proprietary colonies. Lord Baltimore had already, in 1632, set up a colony that was to be a home of religious freedom for Catholics under the attractive name of Mary-

land, to the north and east of Virginia; and now the Quaker Penn (who was nevertheless a very good friend of Charles II) established himself to the north at Philadelphia and founded the colony of Pennsylvania. Its main boundary with Maryland and Virginia was delimited by two men, Mason and Dixon, whose "Mason and Dixon line" was destined to become a very important line indeed in the later affairs of the United States. Carolina, which was originally an unsuccessful French Protestant establishment, and which owed its name not to Charles (Carolus) II of England, but to Charles IX of France, had fallen into English hands and was settled at several points.<sup>2</sup> Between Maryland and New



Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

WILLIAM PENN.

<sup>2</sup> There is doubt about the name Carolina. Channing, in his short history, says it was named in honour of Charles II. Bassett says it was named originally Carolana, in honour of Charles I, in 1629, and kept the name, under the new form of Carolina, in honour of Charles II. Fisk, *Old Virginia and her Neighbours*, vol. i. p. 265, speaks of Carolina, in 1629, as named "either in honour of Charles I or because the name had been given by Huguenots in 1562 in honour of Charles IX of France." Another authority speaks

<sup>1</sup> *John Smith's Travels*.



England stretched a number of small Dutch and Swedish settlements, of which the chief town was New Amsterdam. These settlements were captured from the Dutch by the British in 1664, lost again in 1673, and restored by treaty when Holland and England made peace in 1674. Thereby the whole coast from Maine to Carolina became in some form or other a British possession. To the south the Spanish were established; their headquarters were at Fort St. Augustine in Florida, and in 1732 the town of Savannah<sup>1</sup> was settled by a philanthropist, Oglethorpe, from England, who had taken pity on the miserable people imprisoned for debt in England, and rescued a number of them from prison to become the founders of a new colony, Georgia, which was to be a bulwark against the Spanish. So by the middle of the eighteenth century we have these settlements along the American coastline: the New England group of Puritans and free Protestants, Maine (belonging to Massachusetts), New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts; the captured Dutch group, which was now divided up into New York (New Amsterdam rechristened), New Jersey, and Delaware (Swedish before it was Dutch, and in its earliest British phase attached to Pennsylvania); then came Catholic Maryland; Cavalier Virginia; Carolina (which was presently divided into North and South) and Oglethorpe's Georgia. Later on a number of Tyrolese Protestants took refuge in Georgia, and there was a considerable immigration of a good class of German cultivators into Pennsylvania.

Such were the miscellaneous origins of the citizens of the Thirteen Colonies.<sup>2</sup> The possibility of their ever becoming closely united would have struck an impartial observer in 1760 as being very slight. Superadded to the

of the name as used before, and now no doubt retained in honour of the English king; but, according to him, the name had not been used for the country (called, by the French, Florida), but for a fort in it, the *arx Carolana*. He adds that in 1629 the name *Carolana* is used, but *Carolina* appears afterwards, and becomes normal after 1662.—E. B.

<sup>1</sup> From the Spanish word *Sabaña* = "meadow."—H. H. J.

<sup>2</sup> See for the fundamental differences of north and south, W. Wilson, *The State*, the historical sections at the beginning of the chapter on the United States Government.—E. B.

initial differences of origin, fresh differences were created by climate. North of the Mason and Dixon line farming was practised mainly upon British or Central European lines by free white cultivators. The settled country of New England took on a likeness to the English country-side; considerable areas of Pennsylvania developed fields and farmhouses like those of South Germany. The distinctive conditions in the north had, socially, important effects. Masters and men had to labour together as backwoodsmen, and were equalized in the process. They did not start equally; many "servants" are mentioned in the roster of the *Mayflower*. But they rapidly became equal under colonial conditions; there was, for instance, a vast tract of land to be had for the taking, and the "servant" went off and took land like his master. The English class system disappeared. Under colonial conditions there arose equality "in the faculties both of body and mind," and an individual independence of judgment impatient of interference from England. But south of the Mason and Dixon line tobacco growing began, and the warmer climate encouraged the establishment of plantations with gang labour. Red Indian captives were employed; Cromwell sent Irish prisoners of war to Virginia, which did much to reconcile the Royalist planters to republicanism; convicts were sent out, and there was a considerable trade in kidnapped children, who were "spirited away" to America to become apprentices or bond slaves. But the most convenient form of gang labour proved to be that of negro slaves. The first negro slaves were brought to Jamestown in Virginia by a Dutch ship as early as 1620. By 1700 negro slaves were scattered all over the states, but Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas were their chief regions of employment, and while the communities to the north were communities of not very rich and not very poor farming men, the south developed a type of large proprietor and a white community of overseers and professional men subsisting on slave labour. Slave labour was a necessity to the social and economic system that had grown up in the south; in the north the presence of slaves was unnecessary and in some respects inconvenient. Conscientious scruples about slavery were more free, therefore, to de-





Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

WILLIAM PENN'S TREATY WITH THE INDIANS.  
(After Benjamin West, 1682.)

velop and flourish in the northern atmosphere. To this question of the revival of slavery in the world we must return when we come to consider the perplexities of American Democracy. Here we note it simply as an added factor in the heterogeneous mixture of the British Colonies.<sup>1</sup>

But if the inhabitants of the Thirteen Colonies were miscellaneous in their origins and various in their habits and sympathies, they had three very strong antagonisms in common. They had a common interest against the Red Indians. For a time they shared a common dread of French conquest and dominion. And thirdly, they were all in conflict with the claims of the British crown and the commercial selfishness of the narrow oligarchy who dominated the British Parliament and British affairs.

So far as the first danger went, the Indians were a constant evil, but never more than a threat of disaster. They remained divided against themselves. Yet they had shown possibilities of combination upon a larger scale. The Five Nations of the Iroquois (see map) was a very important league of tribes. But

it never succeeded in playing off the French against the English to secure itself, and no Red Indian Jengis Khan ever arose among these nomads of the New World. The French aggression was a more serious threat. The French never made settlements in America on a scale to compete with the English, but their government set about the encirclement of the colonies and their subjugation in a terrifyingly systematic manner. The English in America were colonists; the French were explorers, adventurers, agents, missionaries, merchants, and soldiers. Only in Canada did they strike root. French statesmen sat over maps and dreamt dreams, and their dreams are to be seen in our map in the chain of forts creeping southward from the great Lakes and northward up the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. The struggle of France and Britain was a world-wide struggle. It was decided in India, in Germany, and on the high seas. In the Peace of Paris (1763) the French gave England Canada, and relinquished Louisiana to the inert hands of declining Spain. It was the complete abandonment of America by France. The lifting of the French danger left the colonists unencumbered to face their third common

<sup>1</sup> An admirable account of negro slavery is to be found in Sir H. H. Johnston's *The Negro in the New World*.



antagonist—the crown and government of their mother land.

### § 3

We have noted in the previous chapter how the governing class of Great Britain steadily acquired the land and destroyed the liberty of the common people throughout the eighteenth century, and how greedily and blindly the new industrial revolution was brought about. We have noted also how the British Parliament, through the decay of the representative methods of the House of Commons, had become both in its upper and lower houses merely the instrument of government through the big landowners. Both these big property-holders and the crown were deeply interested in America; the former as private adventurers, the latter partly as representing the speculative exploitations of the Stuart kings, and partly as representing the state in search of funds for the expenses of foreign policy, and neither lords nor crown were disposed to regard the traders, planters, and common people of the colonies with any more consideration than they did the yeomen and small cultivators at home. At bottom the interests of the common man in Great Britain, Ireland, and America were the same. Each was being squeezed by the same system. But while in Britain oppressor and oppressed were closely tangled up in one intimate social system, in America the crown and the exploiter were far away, and men could get together and develop a sense of community against their common enemy.

Moreover, the American colonist had the important advantage of possessing a separate and legal organ of resistance to the British government in the assembly or legislature of his colony that was necessary for the management of local affairs. The common man in Britain, cheated out of his proper representation in the Commons, had no organ, no centre of expression and action for his discontents.

It will be evident to the reader, bearing in mind the variety of the colonies, that here was the possibility of an endless series of disputes, aggressions, and counter-aggressions. The story of the development of irritations between the colonies and Britain is a story far too

intricate, subtle, and lengthy for the scheme of this Outline. Suffice it that the grievances fell under three main heads: attempts to secure for British adventurers or the British government the profits of the exploitation of new lands; systematic restrictions upon trade designed to keep the foreign trade of the colonies entirely in British hands, so that the colonial exports all went through Britain and only British-made goods were used in America;<sup>1</sup> and finally attempts at taxation through the British Parliament as the supreme taxing authority of the empire. Under the pressure of this triple system of annoyances, the American colonists were forced to do a very considerable amount of hard political thinking. Such men as Patrick Henry and James Otis began to discuss the fundamental ideas of government and political association very much as they had been discussed in England in the great days of Cromwell's Commonwealth. They began to deny both the divine origin of kingship and the supremacy of the British Parliament, and (James Otis, 1762<sup>2</sup>) to say such things as:—

“God made all men naturally equal.

“Ideas of earthly superiority are educational, not innate.

“Kings were made for the good of the people, and not the people for them.

“No government has a right to make slaves of its subjects.

“Though most governments are *de facto* arbitrary, and consequently the curse and

<sup>1</sup> I disbelieve in this “commercial selfishness” emphasized in the text. Modern American historians, such as Beer, themselves rebut the charge. On the whole, English commercial policy was fair. (1) If the colonists could only export certain “enumerated” commodities to England, the English market was the best, and they were given privileges there; while non-enumerated commodities could be exported anywhere, and even “enumerated” articles were in practice smuggled everywhere. (2) If the colonists had to import from England, it was their best market, and they got “drawbacks” on dutiable goods imported into England from the Continent when they took them out of England; while again in practice they freely smuggled goods from any country to America. (3) The English navigation laws, in the long run, encouraged American shipbuilding; and if some colonial manufactures were stopped in order that they might not compete with English manufactures, the amount of such restriction was slight. On all this, see Sir William Ashley, *Surveys Historic and Economic*, pp. 300 *seq.*—E. B.

<sup>2</sup> See Tudor's *Life of James Otis*.



scandal of human nature, yet none are *de jure* arbitrary."

Some of which propositions reach far.

This ferment in the political ideas of the Americans was started by English leaven. One very influential English writer was John Locke (1632-1704), whose *Two Treatises on Civil Government* may be taken, as much as any one single book can be taken in such cases, as the point of departure for modern democratic ideas. He was the son of a Cromwellian soldier, he was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, during the republican ascendancy, he spent some years in Holland in exile, and his writings form a bridge between the bold political thinking of those earlier republican days and the revolutionary movement both in America and France.

But men do not begin to act upon theories. It is always some real danger, some practical necessity, that produces action; and it is only after action has destroyed old relationships and produced a new and perplexing state of affairs that theory comes to its own. Then it is that theory is put to the test. The discord in interests and ideas between the colonists was brought to a fighting issue by the obstinate resolve of the British Parliament after the peace of 1763 to impose taxation upon the American colonies. Britain was at peace and flushed with successes; it seemed an admirable opportunity for settling accounts with these recalcitrant settlers. But the great British property-owners found a power beside their own, of much the same mind with them, but a little divergent in its ends—the reviving crown. King George III, who had begun his reign in 1760, was resolved to be much more of a king than his two German predecessors. He could speak English; he claimed to "glory in the name of Briton"—and indeed it is not a bad name for a man without a perceptible drop of English, Welsh, or Scotch blood in his veins. In the American colonies and the overseas possessions generally, with their indefinite charters or no charters at all, it seemed to him that the crown might claim authority and obtain resources and powers absolutely denied to it by the strong and jealous aristocracy in Britain. This inclined many of the Whig noblemen to a sympathy with the colonists that they might not otherwise have shown. They had no

objection to the exploitation of the colonies in the interests of British "private enterprise," but they had very strong objections to the strengthening of the crown by that exploitation so as to make it presently independent of themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The war that broke out was therefore in reality not a war between Britain and the colonists, it was a war between the British government and the colonists, with a body of Whig noblemen and a considerable amount of public feeling in England on the side of the latter. An early move after 1763 was an attempt to raise revenue for Britain in the colonies



Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

KING GEORGE III.

by requiring that newspapers and documents of various sorts should be stamped. This was stiffly resisted, the British crown was intimidated, and the Stamp Acts were repealed (1766). Their repeal was greeted by riotous rejoicings in London, more hearty even than those in the colonies.

But the Stamp Act affair was only one eddy in a turbulent stream flowing towards civil war.

<sup>1</sup> I disagree entirely with this. George, with the bulk of Parliament behind him, was out to insist on the sovereignty of the British Parliament (not of himself) over the colonists. Nor was it the Whig noblemen who opposed him, but Burke (conservatively inclined, and therefore up in arms for the traditional rights of the colonial legislatures) and Chatham (liberally inclined, and therefore up in arms for the principle of "no representation, no taxation").—E. B.

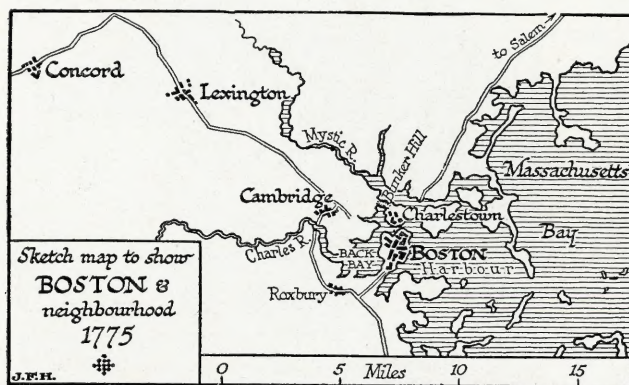


Upon a score of pretexts, and up and down the coast, the representatives of the British government were busy asserting their authority and making British government intolerable. The quartering of soldiers upon the colonists was a great nuisance. Rhode Island was particularly active in defying the trade restrictions; the Rhode Islanders were "free traders,"—that is to say, smugglers; a government schooner, the *Gaspee*, ran aground off Providence; she was surprised, boarded, and captured by armed men in boats, and burnt. In 1773, with a total disregard of the existing colonial tea trade, special advantages for the importation of tea into America<sup>1</sup> were given by the British Parliament to the East India Company. It was resolved by the colonists to refuse and

under General Gage. The colonists took counter-measures. The first colonial Congress met at Philadelphia in September, at which twelve colonies were represented: Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and North and South Carolina. Georgia was not present. True to the best English traditions, the Congress documented its attitude by a "Declaration of Rights." Practically this Congress was an insurrectionary government, but no blow was struck until the spring of 1775. Then came the first shedding of blood.

Two of the American leaders, Hancock and Samuel Adams, had been marked down by the British Government for arrest and trial for treason; they were known to be at Lexington, about eleven miles from Boston; and in the night of April 18th, 1775, Gage set his forces in motion for their arrest.

That night was a momentous one in history. The movement of Gage's troops had been observed, signal lanterns were shown from a church tower in Boston, and two men, Dawes and Paul Revere, stole away in boats across the Back Bay to take horse and warn the country-side. The British were also ferried over the water, and as they marched through the night towards



boycott this tea. When the tea importers at Boston showed themselves resolute to land their cargoes, a band of men disguised as Indians, in the presence of a great crowd of people, boarded the three tea ships and threw the tea overboard (December 16th, 1773).

All 1774 was occupied in the gathering up of resources on either side for the coming conflict. It was decided by the British Parliament in the spring of 1774 to punish Boston by closing her port. Her trade was to be destroyed unless she accepted that tea. This is the sort of silly "firmness" of the governing class that shatters empires. In order to enforce this measure, British troops were concentrated at Boston

Lexington, the firing of signal cannon and the ringing of church bells went before them. As they entered Lexington at dawn, they saw a little company of men drawn up in military fashion. It seems that the British fired first. There was a single shot and then a volley, and the little handful decamped, apparently without any answering shots, leaving eight dead and nine wounded upon the village green.

The British then marched on to Concord, ten miles further, occupied the village, and stationed a party on the bridge at that place. The expedition had failed in its purpose of arresting Hancock and Adams, and the British commander seems to have been at a loss what to do next. Meanwhile the colonial levies were coming up from all directions, and presently the picket upon the bridge found itself subjected to an increasing fire from a gathering number of

<sup>1</sup> This again in my view is wrong. The system proposed, I read in an American writer, meant cheaper tea in the colonies. The objection taken by the colonists was legal.—E. B.



assailants firing from behind trees and fences. A retreat to Boston was decided upon. It was a disastrous retreat. The country had risen behind the British; all the morning the colonials had been gathering. Both sides of the road were now swarming with sharpshooters firing from behind rock and fence and building; the soldiers were in conspicuous scarlet uniforms, with yellow facings and white gaiters and cravats; this must have stood out very vividly against the cold sharp colours of the late New England spring; the day was bright, hot, and dusty, and they were already exhausted by a night march. Every few yards a man fell, wounded or killed. The rest tramped on, or halted to fire an ineffectual volley. No counter-attack was possible. Their assailants lurked everywhere. At Lexington there were British reinforcements and two guns, and after a brief rest the retreat was resumed in better order. But the sharpshooting and pursuit were pressed to the river, and after the British had crossed back into Boston, the colonial levies took up their quarters in Cambridge and prepared to blockade the city.

#### § 4

So the war began. It was not a war that promised a conclusive end. The colonists had no one vulnerable capital; they were dispersed over a great country, with a limitless wilderness behind it, and so they had great powers of resistance. They had learnt their tactics largely from the Indians; they could fight well in open order, and harry and destroy troops in movement. But they had no disciplined army that could meet the British in a pitched battle, and little military equipment; and their levies grew impatient at a long campaign, and tended to go home to their farms. The British, on the other hand, had a well-drilled army, and their command of the sea gave them the power of shifting their attack up and down the long Atlantic seaboard. They were at peace with all the world. But the king was stupid and greedy to interfere in the conduct of affairs; the generals he favoured were stupid "strong men" or flighty men of birth and fashion; and the heart of England was not in the business. He trusted rather to being able to block-

ade, raid, and annoy the colonists into submission than to a conclusive conquest and occupation of the land. But the methods employed, and particularly the use of hired German troops, who still retained the cruel traditions of the Thirty Years' War, and of Indian auxiliaries, who raped and scalped the outlying settlers, did not so much weary the Americans of the war as of the British. The Congress, meeting for the second time in 1775, endorsed the actions of the New England colonists, and appointed George Washington the American commander-in-chief. In 1777, General Burgoyne, in an attempt to get down to New York from Canada, was defeated at Freeman's Farm on the Upper Hudson, and surrounded and obliged to capitulate at Saratoga with his whole army. This disaster encouraged the French and Spanish to come into the struggle on the side of the colonists. The French sent an army to the States under General Lafayette, and their fleet did much to minimise the advantage of the British at sea. General Cornwallis was caught in the Yorktown peninsula in Virginia in 1781, and capitulated with his army. The British Government, now heavily engaged with France and Spain in Europe, was at the end of its resources.

At the outset of the war the colonists in general seem to have been as little disposed to repudiate monarchy and claim complete independence as were the Hollanders in the opening phase of Philip II's persecutions and follies. The separatists were called radicals; they were mostly extremely democratic, as we should say in England to-day, and their advanced views frightened many of the steadier and wealthier colonists, for whom class privileges and distinctions had considerable charm. But early in 1776 an able and persuasive Englishman, Tom Paine, published a pamphlet at Philadelphia with the title of *Common Sense*, which had an enormous effect on public opinion. Its style was rhetorical by modern standards. "The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of Nature cries, 'Tis time to part,'" and so forth. But its effects were very great. It converted thousands to the necessity of separation. The turn-over of opinion, once it had begun, was rapid.

Only in the summer of 1776 did Congress

The War of  
Independence.



take the irrevocable step of declaring for separation. "The Declaration of Independence," another of those exemplary documents which it has been the peculiar service of the English to produce for mankind, was drawn up by Thomas Jefferson; and after various amendments and modifications it was made the fundamental document of the United States of America. There were two noteworthy amendments to Jefferson's draft. He had denounced the slave trade fiercely, and blamed the home government for interfering with colonial attempts to end it. This was thrown out, and so too was a sentence about the British: "we must endeavour to forget our former love for them . . . we might have been a free and a great people together."

(But for the British crown and great proprietors and the mutual ignorance of the common men in the two countries.)<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of 1782, the preliminary articles of the treaty in which Britain recognized the complete independence of the United States were signed at Paris. The end of the war was proclaimed on April 19th, 1783, exactly eight years after Paul Revere's ride and the retreat of Gage's men from Concord to Boston. The

<sup>1</sup> I think this gives an erroneous impression that there was no real chance of reconciliation in 1776. There was. And indeed the whole separation was far from inevitable. If the British had (1) recognized the autonomy in each colony of its legislature, and (2) granted to the colonies cabinet government in place of government by governors sent from England, there would have been no schism. By 1839, the time of Lord Durham's report, the British had learned to make the recognition and the grant; and with greater wisdom they could have made both in 1776. A great statesman in 1776 could have stopped the separation, and made history different. I am inclined to say that nothing is inevitable in history—except that when you don't have good men, you don't get good results. And that was the position under George III and Lord North.—E. B.

Treaty of Peace was finally signed at Paris in September.

## § 5

From the point of view of human history,

the way in which the Thirteen States became independent is

The Constitution of the United States.

of far less importance than the fact that they did become independent. And with the establishment of their independence came a new sort of community into the world. It was like something coming out of an egg. It was a Western European civilization that had broken free from the last traces of Empire and Christendom; it had not a vestige of

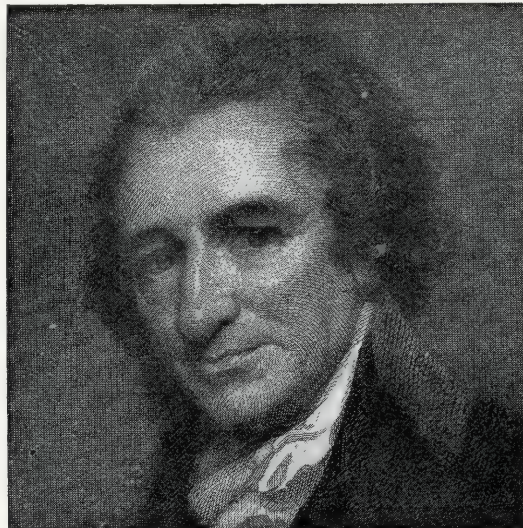


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THOMAS PAINE.  
(After Romney.)

monarchy left and no state religion. It had no dukes, princes, counts, nor any sort of title-bearers claiming to ascendancy or respect as a right. Even its unity was as yet a mere unity for defence and freedom. It was in these respects such a clean start in political organization as the world had not seen before. The absence of any binding religious tie is especially noteworthy. It had a number of forms of Christianity, its spirit was indubitably Christian; but as a state document of 1796 explicitly declared, "The government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion."<sup>2</sup> The new community had in fact gone right down to the bare and stripped fundamentals of human association, and it was building up a new sort of society and a new sort of state upon those foundations.

Here were about four million people scattered over vast areas with very slow and difficult means of intercommunication, poor as yet, but with the potentialities of limitless wealth, setting out to do in reality on a huge scale

<sup>2</sup> The Tripoli Treaty, see Channing, vol. iii. chap. xviii.



such a feat of construction as the Athenian philosophers twenty-two centuries before had done in imagination and theory.

This situation marks a definite stage in the release of man from precedent and usage, and a definite step forward towards the conscious and deliberate reconstruction of his circumstances to suit his needs and aims. It was a new method becoming practical in human affairs. The modern states of Europe have been evolved institution by institution slowly and planlessly out of preceding things. The United States were planned and made.

In one respect, however, the creative freedom of the new nation was very seriously restricted. This new sort of community and state was not built upon a cleared site. It was not even so frankly an artificiality as some of the later Athenian colonies, which went out from the mother city to plan and build brand new city states with brand new constitutions. The thirteen colonies by the end of the war had all of them constitutions either like that of Connecticut and Rhode Island dating from their original charters (1662) or, as in the case of the

rest of the states, where a British governor had played a large part in the administration, remade during the conflict. But we may well consider these reconstructions as contributory essays and experiments in the general constructive effort.

Upon the effort certain ideas stood out very prominently. One is the idea of political and social equality. This idea, which we saw coming into the world as an extreme and almost incredible idea in the age between Buddha and Jesus of Nazareth, is now asserted in the later eighteenth century as a practicable standard of human relationship. Says the fundamental statement of Virginia: "All men are by nature equally free and independent," and it proceeds to rehearse their "rights," and to assert that all magistrates and governors are but "trustees and servants" of the commonweal. All men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion. The king by right, the aristocrat, the "natural slave," the god king, and the god have all vanished from this political scheme—so far as these declarations go. Most of the states produced similar preludes to government. The

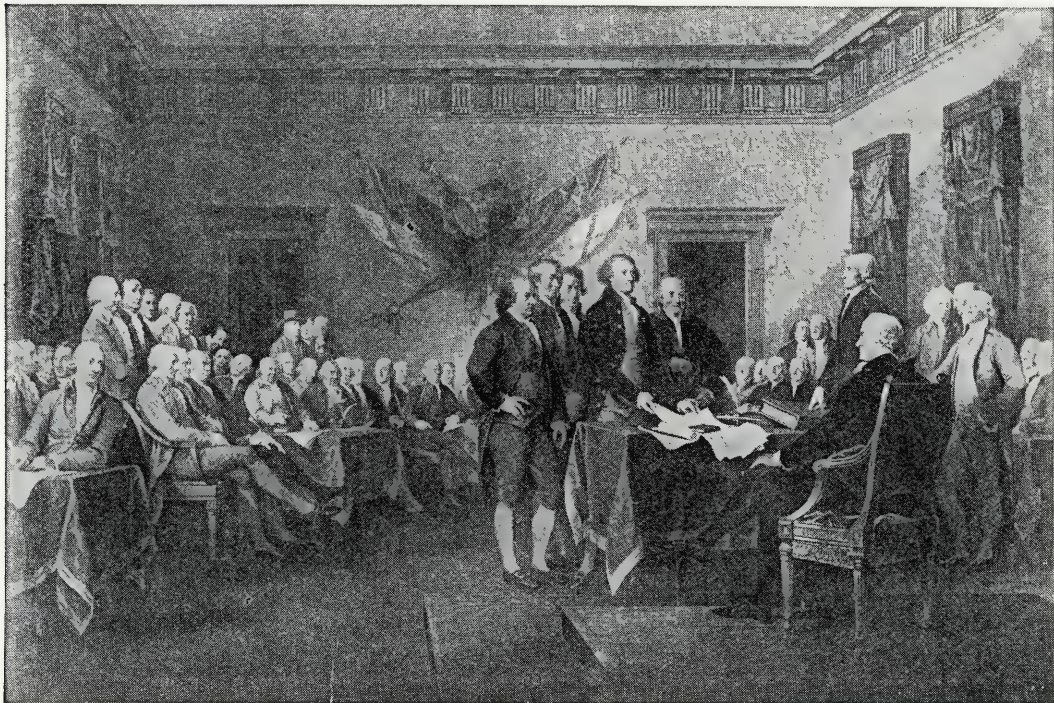


Photo: Rischgitz Collection

SIGNING THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.  
(After the painting by Trumbull.)

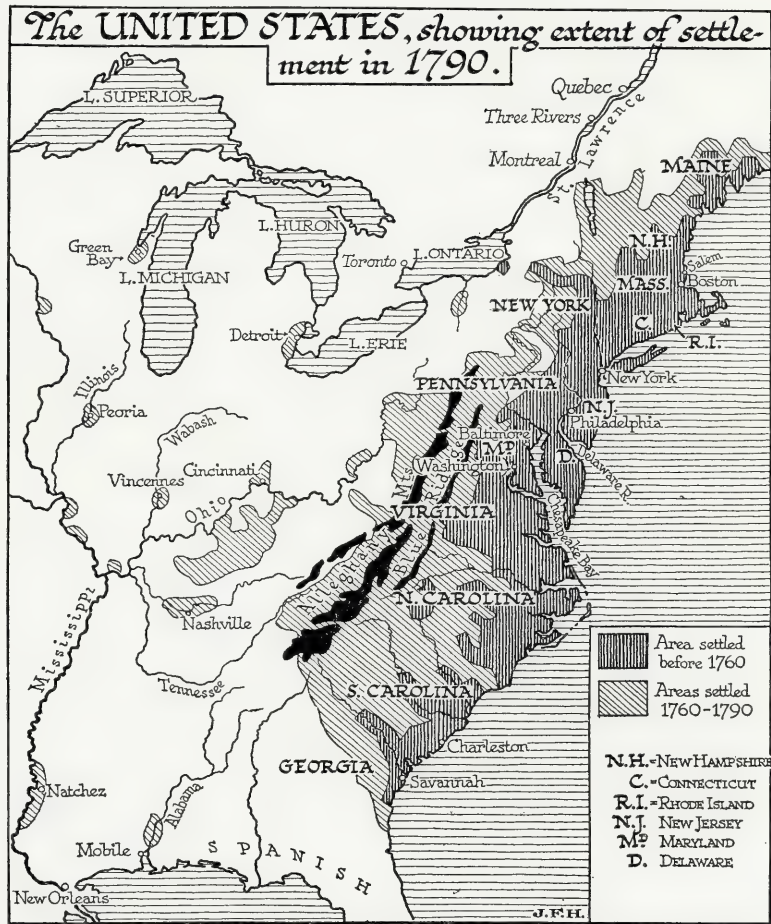


Declaration of Independence said that "all men are born equal." It is everywhere asserted in eighteenth-century terms that the new community is to be—to use the phraseology we have introduced in an earlier chapter—a community of will and not a community of obedience. But the thinkers of that time had a rather clumsier way of putting the thing, they imagined a sort of individual choice of and assent to citizenship that never in fact occurred—the so-called Social Contract. The Massachusetts preamble, for instance, asserts that the state is a voluntary association, "by which the whole people covenants with each citizen and each citizen with the whole people that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good."

Now it will be evident that most of these fundamental statements are very questionable statements. Men are not born equal, they are not born free; they are born a most various multitude enmeshed in an ancient and complex social net. Nor is any man invited to sign the social contract or, failing that, to depart into solitude. These statements, literally interpreted, are so manifestly false that it is impossible to believe that the men who made them intended them to be literally interpreted.

They made them in order to express certain elusive but profoundly important ideas—ideas that after another century and a half of thinking the world is in a better position to express. Civilization, as this Outline has shown, arose as a community of obedience, and was essentially a community of obedience. But generation after generation the spirit was abused by priests and rulers. There was a continual influx of masterful will from the forests, parklands, and steppes. The human spirit had at last rebelled

altogether against the blind obediences of the common life; it was seeking—and at first it was seeking very clumsily—to achieve a new and better sort of civilization that should also be a community of will. To that end it was necessary that every man should be treated as the sovereign of himself; his standing was to be one of fellowship and not of servility. His real use, his real importance depended upon his individual quality.



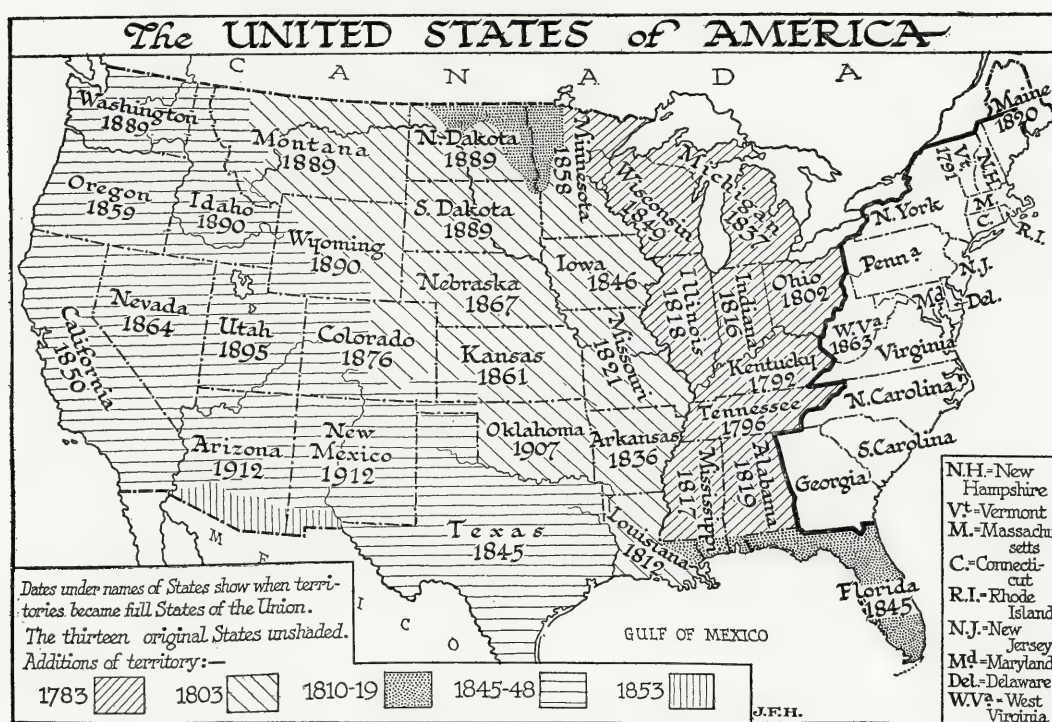
The method by which these creators of political America sought to secure this community of will was an extremely simple and crude one. They gave what was for the time, and in view of American conditions, a very wide franchise. Conditions varied in the different states; the widest franchise was in Pennsylvania, where every adult male taxpayer voted, but, compared with Britain, all the United States were well within sight of manhood suffrage by the end of the eighteenth century. These



makers of America also made efforts, considerable for their times, but puny by more modern standards, to secure a widely diffused common education. The information of the citizens as to what was going on at home and abroad, they left, apparently without any qualms of misgiving, to public meetings and the privately owned printing press.

The story of the various state constitutions, and of the constitution of the United States as a whole, is a very intricate one, and we can only deal with it here in the broadest way.

ultra-democratic state of affairs. Apart from the argument that legislation should be slow as well as sure, it is difficult to establish any necessity for this "bi-cameral" arrangement. It seems to have been a fashion with constitution planners in the eighteenth century rather than a reasonable necessity. The British division was an old one; the Lords, the original parliament, was an assembly of "notables," the leading men of the kingdom; the House of Commons came in as a new factor, as the elected spokesmen of the burghers and the small landed



The most noteworthy point in a modern view is the disregard of women as citizens. The American community was a simple, largely agricultural community, and most women were married; it seemed natural that they should be represented by their men folk. But New Jersey admitted a few women to vote on a property qualification. Another point of great interest is the almost universal decision to have two governing assemblies, confirming or checking each other, on the model of the Lords and Commons of Britain. Only Pennsylvania had a single representative chamber, and that was felt to be a very dangerous and

men. It was a little too hastily assumed in the eighteenth century that the commonalty would be given to wild impulses and would need checking; opinion was for democracy, but for democracy with powerful brakes always on, whether it was going up hill or down. About all the upper houses there was therefore a flavour of selectness; they were elected on a more limited franchise. This idea of making an upper chamber which shall be a stronghold for the substantial man does not appeal to modern thinkers so strongly as it did to the men of the eighteenth century, but the bi-cameral idea in another form still has its advocates. They



suggest that a community may with advantage consider its affairs from two points of view—through the eyes of a body elected to represent trades, industries, professions, public services, and the like, a body representing *function*, and through the eyes of a second body elected by localities to represent *communities*. For the members of the former a man would vote by his calling, for the latter by his district of residence. They point out that the British House of Lords is in effect a body representing function, in which the land, the law, and the church are no doubt disproportionately represented, but in which industrialism, finance, the great public services, art, science, and medicine, also find places; and that the British House of Commons is purely geographical in its reference. It has even been suggested in Britain that there should be “labour peers,” selected from among the leaders of the great industrial trade unions. But these are speculations beyond our present scope.

The Central Government of the United States was at first a very feeble body, a congress of representatives of the thirteen governments, held together by certain Articles of Confederation. This Congress was little more than a conference of sovereign representatives; it had no control, for instance, over the foreign trade of each state, it could not coin money or levy taxes by its own authority. When John Adams, the first minister from the United States to England, went to discuss a commercial treaty with the British Foreign Secretary, he was met by a request for thirteen representatives, one from each of the states concerned. He had to confess his inadequacy to make binding arrangements. The British presently began dealing with each state separately over the head of Congress, and they retained possession of a number of posts in the American territory about the great lakes because of the inability of Congress to hold these regions effectually. In another urgent matter Congress proved equally feeble. To the west of the thirteen states stretched limitless lands into which settlers were now pushing in ever-increasing numbers. Each of the states had indefinable claims to expansion westward. It was evident to every clear-sighted man that the jostling of these claims must lead in the long run to war,

unless the Central Government could take on their apportionment. The feebleness of the Central Government, its lack of concentration, became so much of an inconvenience and so manifest a danger that there was some secret discussion of a monarchy, and Nathaniel Gorham of Massachusetts, the president of Congress, caused Prince Henry of Prussia, the brother of Frederick the Great, to be approached on the subject. Finally a constitutional convention was called in 1787 at Philadelphia, and there it was that the present constitution of the United States was in its broad lines hammered out. A great change of spirit had gone on during the intervening years, a widespread realization of the need of unity.

When the Articles of Confederation were drawn up, men had thought of the people of Virginia, the people of Massachusetts, the people of Rhode Island, and the like; but now there appears a new conception, “the people of the United States.” The new government, with the executive President, the senators, congressmen, and the Supreme Court that were now created, was declared to be the government of “the people of the United States”; it was a synthesis and not a mere assembly. It said “we the people,” and not “we the states,” as Lee of Virginia bitterly complained. It was to be a “federal” and not a confederate government.

State by state the new constitution was ratified, and in the spring of 1788 the first congress upon the new lines assembled at New York, under the presidency of George Washington, who had been the national commander-in-chief throughout the War of Independence. The constitution then underwent considerable revision, and Washington upon the Potomac was selected as the Federal capital.

## § 6

In an earlier chapter we have described the Roman republic, and its mixture of modern features with dark superstition and primordial savagery, as the Neanderthal anticipation of the modern democratic state. A time may come when people will regard the contrivances and machinery of the American constitution as the political equivalents of the imple-

Primitive  
Features of  
the United  
States Con-  
stitution.



ments and contrivances of Neolithic man. They have served their purpose well, and under their protection the people of the States have grown into one of the greatest, most powerful, and most civilized communities that the world has yet seen ; but there is no reason in that for regarding the American constitution as a thing more final and unalterable than the pattern of street railway that overshadows many New York thoroughfares, or the excellent and homely type of house architecture that still prevails in Philadelphia. These things also have served a purpose well, they have their faults, and they can be improved. Our political contrivances, just as much as our domestic and mechanical contrivances, need to undergo constant revision as knowledge and understanding grow.

Since the American constitution was planned, our conception of history and our knowledge of collective psychology have undergone very considerable development. We are beginning to see many things in the problem of government to which the men of the eighteenth century were blind ; and, courageous as their constructive disposition was in relation to whatever political creation had gone before, it fell far short of the boldness which we in these days realize to be needful if this great human problem of establishing a civilized community of will on the earth is to be solved. They took many things for granted that now we know need to be made the subject of the most exacting scientific study and the most careful adjustment. They thought it was only necessary to set up

schools and colleges, with a grant of land for maintenance, and that they might then be left to themselves. But education is not a weed that will grow lustily in any soil ; it is a necessary and delicate crop that may easily wilt and degenerate. We learn nowadays that the underdevelopment of universities and educational machinery is like some underdevelop-

ment of the brain and nerves, which hampers the whole growth of the social body. By European standards, by the standard of any state that has existed hitherto, the level of the common education of America is high ; but by the standard of what it might be, America is an uneducated country. And those fathers of America thought also that they had but to leave the press free, and everyone would live in the light.

They did not realize that a free press could develop a sort of constitutional venality due to its relations with advertisers, and that large newspaper proprietors could become buccaneers of opinion and insensate wreckers of good beginnings. And, finally, the makers of America had no knowledge of the complexities of vote manipulation. The whole science of elections was beyond their ken, they knew nothing of the need of the transferable vote to prevent the "working" of elections by specialized organizations, and the crude and rigid methods they adopted left their political system the certain prey of the great party machines that have robbed American democracy of half its freedom and most of its political soul. Politics became a trade, and a very base



Photo : Rischgitz Collection.

PATRICK HENRY SPEAKING IN THE HOUSE OF BURGESSES.



trade; decent and able men, after the first great period, drifted out of politics and attended to "business," and what I have called elsewhere the "sense of the state"<sup>1</sup> declined. Private enterprise ruled in many matters of common concern, because political corruption made collective enterprise impossible.

Yet the defects of the great political system created by the Americans of the revolutionary period did not appear at once. For several generations the history of the United States was one of rapid expansion and of an amount of freedom, homely happiness, and energetic work unparalleled in the world's history. And the record of America for the whole last century and a half, in spite of many reversions towards inequality, in spite of much rawness and much blundering, is nevertheless as bright and honourable a story as that of any other contemporary people.

In this brief account of the creation of the United States of America we have been able to do little more than mention the names of some of the group of great men who made this new departure in human history. We have named casually or we have not even named such men as Tom Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, the Adam brothers, Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington. It is hard to measure the men of one period of history with those in another. Some writers, even American writers, impressed by the artificial splendours of the European courts and by the tawdry and destructive exploits of a Frederick the Great or a Great Catherine, display a snobbish shame of some thing homespun about these makers of America. They feel that Benjamin Franklin at the court of Louis XVI, with his long hair, his plain clothes, and his pawky humour, was sadly lacking in aristocratic distinction. But stripped to their personalities, Louis XVI was hardly

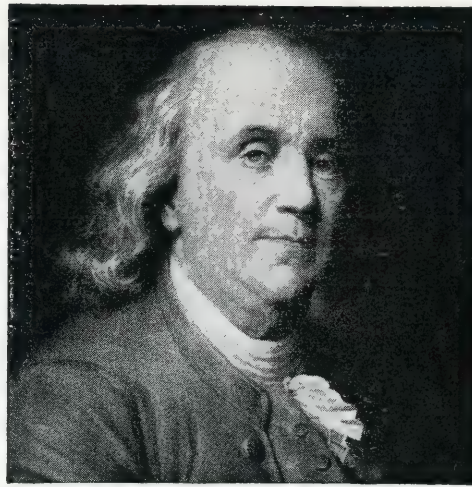


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

gifted enough or noble-minded enough to be Franklin's valet. If human greatness is a matter of scale and glitter, then no doubt Alexander the Great is at the apex of human greatness. But is greatness that? Is not a great man rather one who, in a great position or amidst great opportunities—and great gifts are no more than great opportunities—serves God and his fellows with a humble heart? And a

great number of these Americans of the revolutionary time do seem to have displayed much disinterestedness and devotion. They were limited men, fallible men—Washington was, for example, a conspicuously indolent man—but on the whole they seem to have cared more for the commonweal they were creating than for any personal end or personal vanity.

They were all limited men. They were limited in knowledge and outlook; they were limited by the limitations of the time. And there was no perfect man among them. They were, like all of us, men of mixed motive; good impulses arose in their minds, great ideas swept through them, and also they could be jealous, lazy, obstinate, greedy, vicious. If one were to write a true, full, and particular history of the making of the United States, it would have to be written with charity and high spirits as a splendid comedy. And in no other regard do we find the rich tortuous humanity of the American story so finely displayed as in regard to slavery. Slavery, having regard to the general question of labour, is the test of this new soul in the world's history, the American soul.

Slavery began very early in the European history of America, and no European people who went to America can be held altogether innocent in the matter. At a time when the German is still the moral whipping-boy of Europe, it is well to note that the German record is in this respect the best of all. Almost the

<sup>1</sup> Wells, *The Future in America*.



first outspoken utterances against negro slavery came from German settlers in Pennsylvania. But the German settler was working with free labour upon a temperate country-side, well north of the plantation zone; he was not under serious temptation in this matter. American slavery began with the enslavement of Indians for gang work in mines and upon plantations, and it is curious to note that it was a very good and humane man indeed, Las Casas, who urged that negroes should be brought to America to relieve his tormented Indian protegés. The need for labour upon the plantations of the West Indies and the south was imperative. When the supply of Indian captives proved inadequate, the planters turned not only to the negro, but to the jails and poor-houses of Europe for a supply of toilers. The reader of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* will learn how the business of Virginian white slavery looked to an intelligent Englishman in the early eighteenth century. But the negro came very early. The year (1620) that saw the Pilgrim Fathers landing at Plymouth in New England, saw a Dutch sloop disembarking the first cargo of negroes at Jamestown in Virginia. Negro slavery was as old as New England; it had been an American institution for over a century and a half before the War of Independence. It was to struggle on for the better part of a century more.

But the conscience of thoughtful men in the colonies was never quite easy upon this score, and it was one of the accusations of Thomas Jefferson against the crown and lords of Great Britain that every attempt to ameliorate or restrain the slave trade on the part of the colonists had been checked by the great proprietary interests in the mother country.<sup>1</sup> With the moral and intellectual ferment of the revolution, the question of negro slavery came right into the foreground of the public conscience. The contrast and the challenge glared upon the mind. "All men are by nature free and equal," said the Virginia Bill of Rights, and outside in the sunshine, under the whip of the overseer, toiled the negro slave.

<sup>1</sup> In 1776 Lord Dartmouth wrote that the colonists could not be allowed "to check or discourage a traffic so beneficent to the nation."

It witnesses to the great change in human ideas since the Roman Imperial system dissolved under the barbarian inrush, that there could be this heart-searching. Conditions of industry, production, and land tenure had long prevented any recrudescence of gang slavery; but now the cycle had come round again, and there were enormous immediate advantages to be reaped by the owning and ruling classes in the revival of that ancient institution in mines, upon plantations, and upon great public works. It was revived—but against great opposition. From the beginning of the revival there were protests, and they grew. The revival was counter to the new conscience of mankind. In some respects the new gang slavery was worse than anything in the ancient world. Peculiarly horrible was the provocation by the trade of slave wars and man hunts in Western Africa, and the cruelties of the long transatlantic voyage. The poor creatures were packed on the ships often with insufficient provision of food and water, without proper sanitation, without medicines. Many who could tolerate slavery upon the plantations found the slave trade too much for their moral digestions. Three European nations were chiefly concerned in this dark business, Britain, Spain and Portugal, because they were the chief owners of the new lands in America. The comparative innocence of the other European powers is to be ascribed largely to their lesser temptations. They were similar communities; in parallel circumstances they would have behaved similarly.

Throughout the middle part of the eighteenth century there was an active agitation against negro slavery in Great Britain as well as in the States. It was estimated that in 1770 there were fifteen thousand slaves in Britain, mostly brought over by their owners from the West Indies and Virginia. In 1771 the issue came to a conclusive test in Britain before Lord Mansfield. A negro named James Somerset had been brought to England from Virginia by his owner. He ran away, was captured, and violently taken on a ship to be returned to Virginia. From the ship he was extracted by a writ of *habeas corpus*. Lord Mansfield declared that slavery was a condition unknown to English law, an "odious" condition, and



Somerset walked out of the court a free man.

The Massachusetts constitution of 1780 had declared that "all men are born free and equal." A certain negro, Quaco, put this to the test in 1783, and in that year the soil of Massachusetts became like the soil of Britain, intolerant of slavery; to tread upon it was to become free. At that time no other state in the Union followed this example. At the census of 1790, Massachusetts, alone of all the states, returned "no slaves."

The state of opinion in Virginia is remarkable, because it brings to light the peculiar difficulties of the Southern states. The great Virginian statesmen, such as Washington and Jefferson, condemned the institution, yet because there was no other form of domestic service, Washington owned slaves. There was in Virginia a strong party in favour of emancipating slaves. But they demanded that the emancipated slaves should leave the state within a year or be outlawed! They were naturally alarmed at the possibility that a free barbaric black community, many of its members African-born and reeking with traditions of cannibalism and secret and dreadful religious rites, should arise beside them upon Virginian soil. When we consider that point of view, we can understand why it was that a large number of Virginians should be disposed to retain the mass of blacks in the country under control as slaves, while at the same time they were bitterly opposed to the slave trade and the importation of any fresh blood from Africa. The free blacks, one sees, might easily become a nuisance; indeed the free state of Massachusetts presently closed its borders to their entry. . . . The question of slavery, which in the ancient world was usually no more than a question of status between individuals racially akin, merged in America with the different and profounder question of relationship between two races at opposite extremes of the human species and of the most contrasted types of tradition and culture. If the black man had been white, there can be little doubt that negro slavery, like white servitude, would have vanished from the United States within a generation of the Declaration of Independence as a natural consequence of the statements in that declaration.

### § 7<sup>1</sup>

We have told of the War of Independence in America as the first great break away from the system of European monarchies and foreign offices, as the repudiation by a new community of Machiavellian statescraft as the directive form of human affairs. Within a decade there came a second and much more portentous revolt against this strange game of Great Powers, this tangled interaction of courts and policies which obsessed Europe. But this time it was no breaking away at the outskirts. In France, the nest and home of Grand Monarchy, the heart and centre of Europe, came this second upheaval. And, unlike the American colonists, who simply repudiated a king, the French, following in the footsteps of the English revolution, beheaded one.

Like the British revolution and like the revolution in the United States, the French revolution can be traced back to the ambitious absurdities of the French monarchy. The schemes of aggrandisement, the aims and designs of the Grand Monarch, necessitated an expenditure upon war equipment throughout Europe out of all proportion to the taxable capacity of the age. And even the splendours of monarchy were enormously costly, measured by the productivity of the time. In France, just as in Britain and in America, the first resistance was made not to the monarch as such and to his foreign policy as such, nor with any clear recognition of these things as the roots of the trouble, but merely to the inconveniences and charges upon the individual life caused by them. The practical taxable capacity of France must have been relatively much less than that of England because of the various exemptions of the nobility and clergy. The burthen resting directly upon the common people was heavier. That made the upper classes the confederates of the court instead of the antagonists of the court as they were in England, and so prolonged the period of waste further; but when at last the bursting-

<sup>1</sup> A very readable and remarkably well-illustrated book for the general reader upon the French Revolution is Wheeler's *French Revolution*. Carlyle's *French Revolution* has some splendid passages, but it is often unjust and evil-spirited. Madelin's *French Revolution* is a good recent book.





THE OATH OF THE TENNIS COURT.

From the painting by Auguste Couder at Versailles. (See page 596.)







point did come, the explosion was more violent and shattering.

During the years of the American War of Independence there were few signs of any impending explosion in France.<sup>1</sup> There was much misery among the lower classes, much criticism and satire, much outspoken liberal thinking, but there was little to indicate that the thing as a whole, with all its customs, usages, and familiar discords, might not go on for an indefinite time. It was consuming beyond its powers of production, but as yet only the inarticulate classes were feeling the pinch. Gibbon, the historian, knew France well; Paris was as familiar to him as London; but there is no suspicion to be detected in the passage we have quoted that days of political and social dissolution were at hand. No doubt the world abounded in absurdities and injustices, yet nevertheless, from the point of view of a scholar and a gentleman, it was fairly comfortable, and it seemed fairly secure.

There was much liberal thought, speech, and sentiment in France at this time. Parallel with and a little later than John Locke in England, Montesquieu (1689-1755) in France, in the earlier half of the eighteenth century, had subjected social, political, and religious institutions to the same searching and fundamental analysis, especially in his *Esprit des Lois*. He had stripped the magical prestige from the absolutist monarchy in France. He shares with Locke the credit for clearing away many of the false ideas that had hitherto prevented deliberate and conscious attempts to reconstruct human society. It was not his fault if at first some extremely unsound and impermanent shanties were run up on the vacant site. The generation that followed him in the middle and later decades of the eighteenth century was boldly speculative upon the moral and intellectual clearings he had made. A group of brilliant writers, the "Encyclopædists," mostly rebel spirits from the excellent schools of the Jesuits, set themselves under the leadership of Diderot to scheme out in a group of works, a new world (1766). The glory of the En-

<sup>1</sup> But see Rocquain's *L'Esprit révolutionnaire avant la Révolution*. He traces the growth of a revolutionary spirit in the 18th century, and points to many predictions of a debacle in 18th-century French literature.—E. B.

cyclopædists, says Mallet, lay "in their hatred of things unjust, in their denunciation of the trade in slaves, of the inequalities of taxation, of the corruption of justice, of the wastefulness of wars, in their dreams of social progress, in their sympathy with the rising empire of industry which was beginning to transform the world." Their chief error seems to have been an indiscriminate hostility to religion. They believed that man was naturally just and politically competent, whereas his impulse to social service and self-forgetfulness is usually developed only through an education essentially religious, and sustained only in an atmosphere of honest co-operation. Unco-ordinated human initiatives lead to nothing but social chaos.

Side by side with the Encyclopædists were the Economists or Physiocrats, who were making bold and crude inquiries into the production and distribution of food and goods. Morelly, the author of the *Code de la Nature*, denounced the institution of private property and proposed a communistic organization of society. He was the precursor of that large and various school of collectivist thinkers in the nineteenth century who are lumped together as Socialists.

Both the Encyclopædists and the various Economists and Physiocrats demanded a considerable amount of hard thinking in their disciples. An easier and more popular leader to follow was that eloquent sentimentalist, Rousseau (1712-78). He preached the alluring doctrine that the primitive state of man was one of virtue and happiness, from which he had declined through the rather inexplicable activities of priests, kings, lawyers, and the like. (We have tried to convey to our readers in chap. ix. § 2, primitive man's state of virtue and happiness, as the vivid vision of Mr. Worthington Smith has realized it; and we have done our best to show both the necessity of priests and kings to early civilization, and the possible inconveniences of their later rôles in human affairs.) Rousseau's work was essentially demoralizing. It struck not only at the existing social fabric, but at any social organization. When he wrote *Of the Social Contract*, he did so rather to excuse breaches of the covenant than to emphasize its necessity. Man is so far from perfect, that a writer who could



show that the almost universal disposition, against which we all have to fortify ourselves, to repudiate debts, misbehave sexually, and evade the toil and expenses of education for ourselves and others, is not after all a delinquency, but a fine display of Natural Virtue, was bound to have a large following in every class that could read him. Rousseau's tremendous vogue did much to swamp the harder, clearer thinkers of this time, and to prepare a sentimental, declamatory, and insincere popular psychology for the great trials that were now coming upon France.<sup>1</sup>

We have already remarked that hitherto no human community has begun to act upon theory. There must first be some breakdown and necessity for direction that lets theory into her own. Up to 1788 the republican and anarchist talk and writing of French thinkers must have seemed as ineffective and politically unimportant as the æsthetic socialism of William Morris at the end of the nineteenth century. There was the social and political system going on with an effect of invincible persistence, the king hunting and mending his clocks, the court and the world of fashion pursuing their pleasures, the financiers conceiving continually more enterprising extensions of credit, business blundering clumsily along its ancient routes, much incommoded by taxes

<sup>1</sup> I disagree utterly and entirely with this view of Rousseau, which is quite unfair to the man who wrote *Du Contrat Social*. (1) He did not believe in the "state of nature"; he believed in the State, which had lifted man from being a brute that followed its nose into a reasoning being and a man. (2) He did not write to excuse breakers of the covenant. On the contrary, he wrote to preach the sovereignty of the general will, and he believed in the entire control of the individual by that will. Rousseau has been much misrepresented, and the text follows the misrepresentations. See Vaughan, *The Political Writings of Rousseau*, introduction to *Du Contrat Social*.—E. B.

and imposts, the peasants worrying, toiling, and suffering, full of a hopeless hatred of the nobleman's château. Men talked—and felt they were merely talking. Anything might be said, because nothing would ever happen.

## § 8

The first jar to this sense of the secure continuity of life in France



Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

LOUIS XVI.

The Revolution came in 1787. Louis XVI (1774-93) was a dull, ill-educated monarch, and he had the misfortune to be married to a silly and extravagant woman, Marie Antoinette, the sister of the Austrian emperor. The question of her virtue is one of profound interest to a certain type of historical writer, but we need not discuss it here. She lived, as Paul Wiriath<sup>2</sup> puts it,

"side by side, but not at the side," of her husband. She was rather heavy-featured, but not so plain as to prevent her posing as a beautiful, romantic, and haughty queen. When the exchequer was exhausted by the war in America (an enterprise to weaken England of the highest Machiavellian quality), when the whole country was uneasy with discontents, she set her influence to thwart the attempts at economy of the king's ministers, to encourage every sort of aristocratic extravagance, and to restore the church and the nobility to the position they had held in the great days of Louis XIV. Non-aristocratic officers were to be weeded from the army; the power of the church over private life was to be extended. She found in an upper-class official, Calonne, her ideal minister of finance. From 1783-87 this wonderful man produced money as if by magic—and as if by magic it disappeared again. Then in 1787 he collapsed. He had piled loan on loan, and now he declared that the monarchy,

<sup>2</sup> Article "France," *Encyclopædia Britannica*.



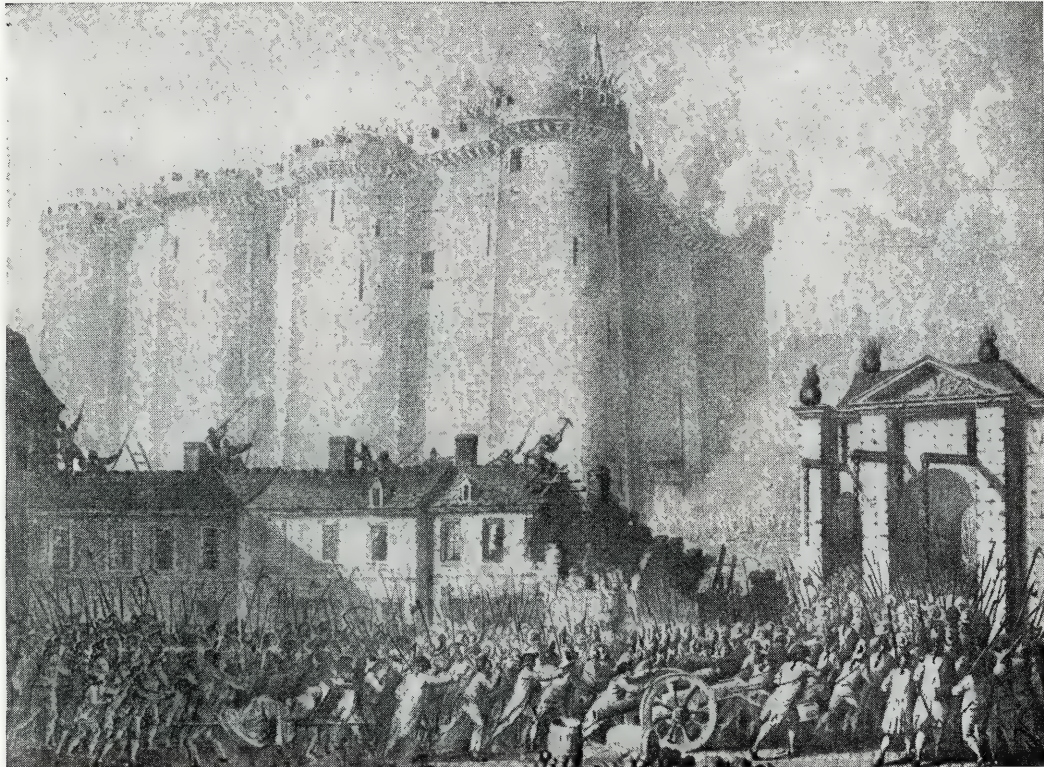


Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE TAKING OF THE BASTILLE.  
(From a contemporary aquatint.)

the Grand Monarchy that had ruled France since the days of Louis XIV, was bankrupt. No more money could be raised. There must be a gathering of the Notables of the kingdom to consider the situation.

To the gathering of notables, a summoned assembly of leading men, Calonne propounded a scheme for a subsidy to be levied upon all landed property. This roused the aristocrats to a pitch of great indignation. They demanded the summoning of a body roughly equivalent to the British parliament, the States General, which had not met since 1610. Regardless of the organ of opinion they were creating for the discontents below them, excited only by the proposal that they should bear part of the weight of the financial burthens of the country, the French notables insisted. And in May, 1789, the States General met.

It was an assembly of the representatives of three orders, the nobles, the clergy, and the Third Estate, the commons. For the Third Estate the franchise was very wide, nearly every

tax-payer of twenty-five having a vote. (The parish priests voted as clergy, the small noblesse as nobles.) The States General was a body without any tradition of procedure. Enquiries were sent to the antiquarians of the Academy of Inscriptions in that matter. Its opening deliberations turned on the question whether it was to meet as one body or as three, each estate having an equal vote. Since the clergy numbered 308, the nobles 285, and the deputies 621, the former arrangement would put the commons in an absolute majority, the latter gave them one vote in three. Nor had the States General any meeting-place. Should it meet in Paris or in some provincial city? Versailles was chosen, "because of the hunting."

It is clear that the king and queen meant to treat this fuss about the national finance as a terrible bore, and to allow it to interfere with their social routine as little as possible. We find the meeting going on in salons that were not wanted, in orangeries and tennis-courts, and so forth.



The question whether the voting was to be by the estates or by head was clearly a vital one. It was wrangled over for six weeks. The Third Estate, taking a leaf from the book of the English House of Commons, then declared that it alone represented the nation, and that no taxation must be levied henceforth without its consent. Whereupon the king closed the hall in which it was sitting, and intimated that the deputies had better go home. Instead, the deputies met in a convenient tennis-court, and there took oath, the Oath of the Tennis Court, not to separate until they had established a constitution in France.

The king took a high line, and attempted to disperse the Third Estate by force. The soldiers refused to act. On that the king gave in with a dangerous suddenness, and accepted the principle that the Three Estates should all deliberate and vote together as one National Assembly. Meanwhile, apparently at the queen's instigation, foreign regiments in the French service, who could be trusted to act against the people, were brought up from the provinces under the Marshal de Broglie, and the king prepared to go back upon his concessions. Whereupon Paris and France revolted. Broglie hesitated to fire on the crowds. A provisional city government was set up in Paris and in most of the other large cities, and a new armed force, the National Guard, a force designed primarily and plainly to resist the forces of the crown, was brought into existence by these municipal bodies.

The revolt of July 1789 was really the

effective French revolution. The grim-looking prison of the Bastille was stormed by the people of Paris, and the insurrection spread rapidly throughout France. Everywhere châteaux belonging to the nobility were burnt by the peasants, their title-deeds carefully destroyed, and the nobles murdered or driven away. In a month the ancient and decayed system of the aristocratic order had collapsed. Many of the leading princes and courtiers of the queen's party fled abroad. The National Assembly found itself called upon to create a new political and social system for a new age.<sup>1</sup>



Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

THE PEOPLE PATROLLING THE STREETS OF PARIS  
ON THE NIGHT OF THE FALL OF THE BASTILLE,  
JULY 12, 1789.

(From a contemporary print.)

## § 9

The French National Assembly was far less

fortunate in the circumstances of its task

than the American Congress. The latter had half a continent to itself, with no possible antagonist but the British Government. Its religious and educational organizations were various, collectively not very powerful, and on the whole friendly. King George

was far away in England, and sinking slowly towards an imbecile condition. Nevertheless, it took the United States several years to hammer out a working constitution. The French, on the other hand, were surrounded by aggressive neighbours with Machiavellian ideas, they were encumbered by a king and court resolved to make mischief, and the church was one single great organization inextricably bound up with the ancient order. The queen

<sup>1</sup> There is a very picturesque account of the storming of the Bastille in Carlyle's *French Revolution*, book v. chap. vi.



was in close correspondence with the Count of Artois, the Duke of Bourbon, and the other exiled princes who were trying to induce Austria and Prussia to attack the new French nation. Moreover, France was already a bankrupt country, while the United States had limitless undeveloped resources; and the revolution, by altering the conditions of land tenure and marketing, had produced an economic disorganization that has no parallel in the case of America.

These were the unavoidable difficulties of the situation. But in addition the Assembly made difficulties for itself. There was no orderly procedure. The English House of Commons had had more than five centuries of experience in its work, and Mirabeau, one of the great leaders of the early Revolution, tried in vain to have the English rules adopted. But the feeling of the times was all in favour of outcries, dramatic interruptions, and such-like manifestations of Natural Virtue. And the disorder did not come merely from the assembly. There was a great gallery, much too great a gallery, for strangers; but who would restrain the free citizens from having a voice in the national control? This gallery swarmed with people eager for a "scene," ready to applaud or shout down the speakers below. The abler speakers were obliged to play to the gallery, and take a sentimental and sensational line. It was easy at a crisis to bring in a mob to kill debate.

So encumbered, the Assembly set about its constructive task. On the Fourth of August it achieved a great dramatic success. Led by several of the nobles, it made a clean sweep, in a series of resolutions, of serfdom, privileges, tax exemptions, tithes, feudal courts. Titles followed. Long before France was a republic it was an offence for a nobleman to sign his name with his title. For six weeks the Assembly devoted itself, with endless opportunities for rhetoric, to the formulation of a Declaration of the Rights of Man—on the lines of the Bills of Rights that were the English preliminaries to organized change. Meanwhile the court plotted for reaction, and the people felt that the court was plotting. The story is complicated here by the scoundrelly schemes of the king's cousin, Philip of Orleans, who hoped to use the discords of the time to replace Louis on the

French throne. His gardens at the Palais Royal were thrown open to the public, and became a great centre of advanced discussion. His agents did much to intensify the popular suspicion of the king. And things were exacerbated by a shortage of provisions—for which the king's government was held guilty.

Presently the loyal Flanders regiment appeared at Versailles. The royal family was scheming to get farther away from Paris—in order to undo all that had been done, to restore tyranny and extravagance. Such constitutional monarchists as General Lafayette were seriously alarmed. And just at this time occurred an outbreak of popular indignation at the scarcity of food, that passed by an easy transition into indignation against the threat of royalist reaction. It was believed that there was an abundance of provisions at Versailles; that food was being kept there away from the people. The public mind had been much disturbed by reports, possibly by exaggerated reports, of a recent banquet at Versailles, hostile to the nation. Here are some extracts from Carlyle, descriptive of that unfortunate feast.

"The Hall of the Opera is granted; the Salon d'Hercule shall be drawing-room. Not only the Officers of Flandre, but of the Swiss, of the Hundred Swiss; nay of the Versailles National Guard, such of them as have any loyalty, shall feast; it will be a Repast like few.

"And now suppose this Repast, the solid part of it, transacted; and the first bottle over. Suppose the customary loyal toasts drunk; the King's health, the Queen's with deafening vivats; that of the Nation 'omitted,' or even 'rejected.' Suppose champagne flowing; with pot-valorous speech, with instrumental music; empty featherheads growing ever the noisier, in their own emptiness, in each other's noise. Her Majesty, who looks unusually sad to-night (His Majesty sitting dulled with the day's hunting), is told that the sight of it would cheer her. Behold! She enters there, issuing from her State-rooms, like the Moon from clouds, this fairest unhappy Queen of Hearts; royal Husband by her side, young Dauphin in her arms! She descends from the Boxes, amid splendour and acclaim; walks queen-like round the Tables; gracefully escorted, gracefully



nodding ; her looks full of sorrow, yet of gratitude and daring, with the hope of France on her mother-bosom ! And now, the band striking up, *O Richard, O mon Roi, l'univers t'abandonne* (O Richard, O my king, the world is all forsaking thee), could man do other than rise to height of pity, of loyal valour ? Could feather-headed young ensigns do other than, by white Bourbon Cockades, handed them from fair fingers ; by waving of swords, drawn to pledge the Queen's health ; by trampling of National Cockades ; by scaling the Boxes, whence intrusive murmurs may come ; by

bread. Maternity must forth to the streets, to the herb-markets and bakers'-queues ; meets there with hunger-stricken Maternity, sympathetic, exasperative. O we unhappy women ! But, instead of bakers'-queues, why not to Aristocrats' palaces, the root of the matter ? *Allons !* Let us assemble. To the Hôtel-de-Ville ; to Versailles. . . ."

There was much shouting and coming and going in Paris before this latter idea realized itself. One Maillard appeared with organizing power, and assumed a certain leadership. There can be little doubt that the revolutionary



Photo : Rischgitz Collection

"À VERSAILLES, À VERSAILLES !" THE WOMEN'S MARCH, OCTOBER 5, 1789.

(From a contemporary print.)

vociferation, sound, fury and distraction, within doors and without—testify what tempest-tost state of vacuity they are in ? . . .

"A natural Repast ; in ordinary times, a harmless one : now fatal. . . . Poor ill-advised Marie Antoinette ; with a woman's vehemence, not with a sovereign's foresight ! It was so natural, yet so unwise. Next day, in public speech of ceremony, her Majesty declares herself 'delighted with Thursday.'"

And here to set against this is Carlyle's picture of the mood of the people.

"In squalid garret, on Monday morning Maternity awakes, to hear children weeping for

leaders, and particularly General Lafayette, used and organized this outbreak to secure the king, before he could slip away—as Charles I did to Oxford—to begin a civil war. As the afternoon wore on, the procession started on its eleven-mile tramp. . . ."

Again we quote Carlyle :

"Maillard has halted his draggled Menads on the last hill-top ; and now Versailles, and the Château of Versailles, and far and wide the inheritance of Royalty opens to the wondering eye. From far on the right, over Marly and Saint-Germain-en-Laye ; round towards Rambouillet, on the left, beautiful all ; softly em-



bosomed ; as if in sadness, in the dim moist weather ! And near before us is Versailles, New and Old ; with that broad frondent *Avenue de Versailles* between—stately frondent, broad, three hundred feet as men reckon, with its four rows of elms ; and then the Château de Versailles, ending in royal parks and pleasantries, gleaming lakelets, arbours, labyrinths, the *Ménagerie*, and Great and Little Trianon. High-towered dwellings, leafy pleasant places ; where the gods of this lower world abide : whence, nevertheless, black care cannot be excluded ; whither Menadic hunger is even now advancing, armed with pike-thyrsi ! ”

Rain fell as the evening closed.

“ Behold the Esplanade, over all its spacious expanse, is covered with groups of squalid dripping women ; of lank-haired male rascality, armed with axes, rusty pikes, old muskets, iron-shod clubs (*bâtons ferrés*, which end in knives or swordblades, a kind of extempore billhook) ; looking nothing but hungry revolt. The rain pours : Gardes-du-Corps go caracoling through the groups ‘amid hisses’ ; irritating and agitating what is but dispersed here to reunite there. . . .

“ Innumerable squalid women beleaguer the President and Deputation ; insist on going with him : has not his Majesty himself, looking from the window, sent out to ask, What we wanted ? ‘Bread, and speech with the King,’ that was the answer. Twelve women are clamourously added to the deputation ; and march with it, across the Esplanade ; through dissipated groups, caracoling bodyguards and the pouring rain.

“Bread and not too much talking ! Natural demands.

“ One learns also that the royal Carriages are getting yoked, as if for Metz. Carriages, royal or not, have verily showed themselves at the back gates. They even produced, or quoted, a written order from our Versailles Municipality—which is a monarchic not a democratic one. However, Versailles patrols drove them in again ; as the vigilant Lecointre had strictly charged them to do. . . .

“ So sink the shadows of night, blustering, rainy ; and all paths grow dark. Strangest night ever seen in these regions ; perhaps since the Bartholomew Night, when Versailles, as

Bassompierre writes of it, was a *chétif château*. O for the lyre of some Orpheus, to constrain, with touch of melodious strings, these mad masses into Order ! For here all seems fallen asunder, in wide-yawning dislocation. The highest, as in down-rushing of a world, is come in contact with the lowest : the rascality of France beleaguering the royalty of France ; ‘iron-shod batons’ lifted round the diadem, not to guard it ! With denunciations of blood-thirsty anti-national bodyguards, are heard dark growlings against a queenly name.

“ The Court sits tremulous, powerless : varies with the varying temper of the Esplanade, with the varying colour of the rumours from Paris. Thick-coming rumours ; now of peace, now of war. Necker and all the Ministers consult ; with a blank issue. The *Œil-de-Bœuf* is one tempest of whispers : We will fly to Metz ; we will not fly. The royal carriages again attempt egress—though for trial merely ; they are again driven in by Lecointre’s patrols.”

But we must send the reader to Carlyle to learn of the coming of the National Guard in the night under General Lafayette himself, the bargaining between the Assembly and the King, the outbreak of fighting in the morning between the bodyguard and the hungry besiegers, and how the latter stormed into the palace and came near to a massacre of the royal family. Lafayette and his troops turned out in time to prevent that, and timely cartloads of loaves arrived from Paris for the crowd.

At last it was decided that the king should come to Paris.

“ Processional marches not a few our world has seen ; Roman triumphs and ovations, Cabiric cymbal-beatings, Royal progresses, Irish funerals ; but this of the French Monarchy marching to its bed remained to be seen. Miles long, and of breadth losing itself in vagueness, for all the neighbouring country crowds to see. Slow : stagnating along, like shoreless Lake, yet with a noise like Niagara, like Babel and Bedlam. A splashing and a tramping ; a hurraing, uproaring, musket-volleying ; the truest segment of Chaos seen in these latter Ages ! Till slowly it disembody itself, in the thickening dusk, into expectant Paris, through a double row of faces all the way from Passy to the Hôtel-de-Ville.



"Consider this: Vanguard of National troops; with trains of artillery; of pikemen and pikewomen, mounted on cannons, on carts, hackney-coaches, or on foot. . . . Loaves stuck on the points of bayonets, green boughs stuck in gun-barrels. Next, as main-march, 'fifty cart-loads of corn,' which have been lent, for peace, from the stores of Versailles. Behind which follow stragglers of the Garde-du-Corps; all humiliated, in Grenadier bonnets. Close on these comes the royal carriage; come royal carriages: for there are a hundred national deputies too, among whom sits Mirabeau—his remarks not given. Then finally, pellmell, as rear-guard, Flandre, Swiss, Hundred Swiss, other bodyguards, brigands, whosoever cannot get before. Between and among all which masses flows without limit Saint-Antoine and the Menadic cohort. Menadic especially about the royal carriage. . . . Covered with tricolor; singing 'allusive songs'; pointing with one hand to the royal carriage, which the allusions hit, and pointing to the provision-wagons with the other hand, and these words: 'Courage, Friends! We shall not want bread now; we are bringing you the Baker, the Bakeress and Baker's boy.' . . ."

"The wet day draggles the tricolor, but the joy is unextinguishable. Is not all well now? '*Ah Madame, notre bonne Reine,*' said some of these Strong-women some days hence, 'Ah, Madame, our good Queen, don't be a traitor any more and we will all love you!' . . ."

This was October the sixth, 1789. For nearly two years the royal family dwelt unmolested in the Tuileries. Had the court kept common faith with the people, the king might have died there, a king.

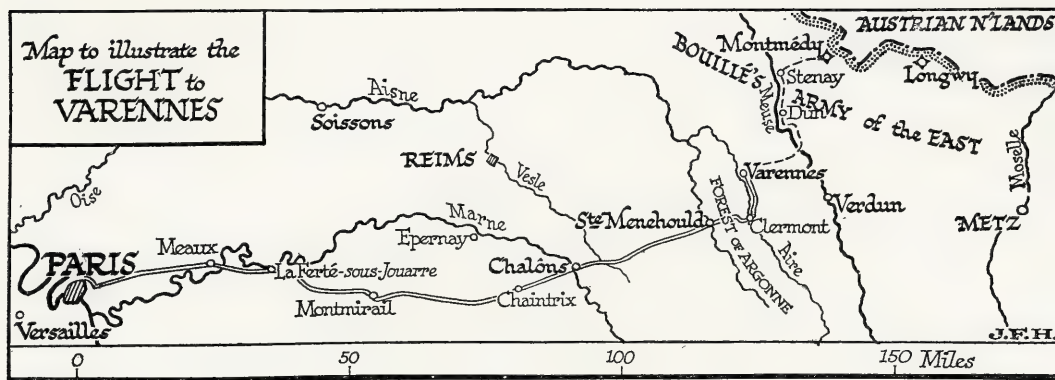
From 1789 to 1791 the early Revolution held its own; France was a limited monarchy, the king kept a diminished state in the Tuileries, and the National Assembly ruled a country at peace. The reader who will glance back to the maps of Poland we have given in the previous chapter will realize what occupied Russia, Prussia, and Austria at this time. While France experimented with a crowned republic in the west, the last division of the crowned republic of the east was in progress. France could wait.

When we consider its inexperience, the con-

ditions under which it worked, and the complexities of its problems, one must concede that the Assembly did a very remarkable amount of constructive work. Much of that work was sound and still endures, much was experimental and has been undone. Some was disastrous. There was a clearing up of the penal code; torture, arbitrary imprisonment, and persecutions for heresy were abolished; and the ancient provinces of France, Normandy, Burgundy, and the like gave, place to eighty departments. Promotion to the highest ranks in the army was laid open to men of every class. An excellent and simple system of law courts was set up, but its value was much vitiated by having the judges appointed by popular election for short periods of time. This made the crowd a sort of final court of appeal, and the judges, like the members of the Assembly, were forced to play to the gallery. And the whole vast property of the church was seized and administered by the state; religious establishments not engaged in education or works of charity were broken up, and the salaries of the clergy made a charge upon the nation. This in itself was not a bad thing for the lower clergy in France, who were often scandalously underpaid in comparison with the richer dignitaries. But in addition the choice of priests and bishops was made elective, which struck at the very root idea of the Roman church, which centred everything upon the Pope, and in which all authority is from above downward. Practically the National Assembly wanted at one blow to make the church in France Protestant, in organization if not in doctrine. Everywhere there were disputes and conflicts between the state priests of the republic and the recalcitrant (non-juring) priests who were loyal to Rome. . . .

One curious thing the National Assembly did which greatly weakened its grip on affairs. It decreed that no member of the Assembly should be an executive minister. This was in imitation of the American constitution, where also ministers are separated from the legislature. The British method has been to have all ministers in the legislative body, ready to answer questions and account for their interpretation of the laws and their conduct of the nation's business. If the legislature represents the





sovereign people, then it is surely necessary for the ministers to be in the closest touch with their sovereign. This severance of the legislature and executive in France caused misunderstandings and mistrust; the legislature lacked control and the executive lacked moral force. This led to such an ineffectiveness in the central government that in many districts at this time, communes and towns were to be found that were practically self-governing communities; they accepted or rejected the commands of Paris as they thought fit, declined the payment of taxes, and divided up the church lands according to their local appetites.

#### § 10

It is quite possible that with the loyal support of the crown and a reasonable patriotism on the part of the nobility, the National Assembly, in spite of its noisy galleries, its Rousseauism, and its inexperience, might have blundered through to a stable form of parliamentary government for France. In Mirabeau it had a statesman with clear ideas of the needs of the time; he knew the strength and the defects of the British system, and apparently he had set himself to establish in France a parallel political organization upon a wider, more honest franchise. He had, it is true, indulged in a sort of Ruritanian flirtation with the queen, seen her secretly, pronounced her very solemnly the "only man" about the king, and made rather a fool of himself in that matter, but his schemes were drawn upon a much larger scale than the scale of the back stairs of the Tuileries. By his death in 1791 France certainly lost one of her most constructive statesmen, and the National

Assembly its last chance of any co-operation with the king. Where there is a court there is usually a conspiracy, and royalist schemes and royalist mischief-making were the last straw in the balance against the National Assembly. The royalists did not care for Mirabeau, they did not care for France; they wanted to be back in their lost paradise of privilege, haughtiness, and limitless expenditure, and it seemed to them that if only they could make the government of the National Assembly impossible, then by a sort of miracle the dry bones of the ancient regime would live again. They had no sense of the other possibility, the gulf of the republican extremists, that yawned at their feet.

One June night in 1791, between eleven o'clock and midnight, the king and queen and their two children slipped out of the Tuileries disguised, threaded their palpitating way through Paris, circled round from the north of the city to the east, and got at last into a travelling-carriage that was waiting upon the road to Chalons. They were flying to the army of the east.<sup>1</sup> The army of the east was "loyal," that is to say, its general and officers at least were prepared to betray France to the king and court. Here was adventure at last after the queen's heart, and one can understand the pleasurable excitement of the little party as the miles lengthened between themselves and Paris. Away over the hills were reverence, deep bows, and the kissing of hands. Then back to Versailles. A little shooting of the mob in Paris—artillery, if need be. A few executions—but not of the sort of people who

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle is at his best on this flight, *French Revolution*, book iv., chaps. iv. and v.



matter. A White Terror for a few months. Then all would be well again. Perhaps Calonne might return too, with fresh financial expedients. He was busy just then gathering support among the German princes. There were a lot of châteaux to rebuild, but the people who burnt them down could hardly complain if the task of rebuilding them pressed rather heavily upon their grimy necks. . . .

All such bright anticipations were cruelly dashed that night at Varennes. The king had been recognized at Sainte Menehould by the landlord of the post-house, and as the night fell, the eastward roads clattered with galloping messengers rousing the country, and trying to intercept the fugitives. There were fresh horses waiting in the upper village of Varennes—the young officer in charge had given the king up for the night and gone to bed—while for half an hour in the lower village the poor king, disguised as a valet, disputed with his postillions, who had expected reliefs in the lower village and refused to go further. Finally they consented to go on. They consented too late. The little party found the postmaster from Sainte Menehould, who had ridden past while the postillions wrangled, and a number of worthy republicans of Varennes whom he had gathered together, awaiting them at the bridge between the two parts of the town. The bridge was barricaded. Muskets were thrust into the carriage: “Your passports?”

The king surrendered without a struggle. The little party was taken into the house of some village functionary. “Well,” said the king, “here you have me!” Also he remarked that he was hungry. At dinner he commended the wine, “quite excellent wine.” What the queen said is not recorded. There were royalist troops at hand, but they attempted no rescue. The tocsin began to ring, and the village “illuminated itself,” to guard against surprise. . . .

A very crestfallen coachload of royalty returned to Paris, and was received by vast crowds—in *silence*. The word had gone forth that whoever insulted the king should be thrashed, and whoever applauded him should be killed. . . .

It was only after this foolish exploit that the idea of a republic took hold of the French mind.

Before this flight to Varennes there was no doubt much abstract republican sentiment, but there was scarcely any expressed disposition to abolish monarchy in France. Even in July, a month after the flight, a great meeting in the Champ de Mars, supporting a petition for the dethronement of the king, was dispersed by the authorities, and many people were killed. But such displays of firmness could not prevent the lesson of that flight soaking into men’s minds. Just as in England in the days of Charles I, so now in France men realized that the king could not be trusted—he was dangerous. The Jacobins, the extreme republican party, grew rapidly in strength. Their leaders, Robespierre, Danton, Marat, who had hitherto been a group of impossibles on the extreme left, began to dominate the National Assembly.

These Jacobins were the equivalents of the American radicals, men with untrammelled advanced ideas. Their strength lay in the fact that they were unencumbered and downright. They were poor men with nothing to lose. The party of moderation, of compromise with the relics of the old order, was led by such men of established position as General Lafayette, the general who had commanded the French troops in America, and Mirabeau, an aristocrat who was ready to model himself on the rich and influential aristocrats of England. But Robespierre was a needy but clever young lawyer from Arras, whose most precious possession was his faith in Rousseau; Danton was a scarcely more wealthy barrister in Paris, one of those big, roaring, gesticulating Frenchmen who are in normal times the heroic loud-talkers of provincial cafés; Marat was an older man, a Swiss of very great scientific distinction, but equally unembarrassed by possessions. On Marat’s scientific standing it is necessary to lay stress because there is a sort of fashion among English writers to misrepresent the leaders of great revolutionary movements as ignorant men. This gives a false view of the mental processes of revolution; and it is the task of the historian to correct it. Marat, we find, was conversant with English, Spanish, German, and Italian; he had spent several years in England, he was made an honorary M.D. of St. Andrew’s, and had published some



valuable contributions to medical science in English. Both Benjamin Franklin and Goethe were greatly interested in his work in physics. This is the man who is called by Carlyle "rabid dog," "atrocious," "squalid," and "Dog-leech"—this last by way of tribute to his science.

The revolution called Marat to politics, and his earliest contributions to the great discussion were fine and sane. There was a prevalent delusion in France that England was a land of liberty. His *Tableau des vices de la constitution d'Angleterre* showed the realities of the English position. His last years were maddened by an almost intoler-

able skin disease which he caught while hiding in the sewers of Paris to escape the consequences of his denunciation of the king as a traitor after the flight to Varennes. Only by sitting in a hot bath could he collect his mind to write. He had been treated hardly and suffered, and he became hard; nevertheless he stands out in history as a man of rare, unblemished honesty. His poverty seems particularly to have provoked the scorn of Carlyle.

"What a road he has travelled; and sits now, about half-past seven of the clock, stewing in slipper-bath; sore afflicted; ill of Revolution Fever. . . . Excessively sick and worn, poor man: with precisely eleven-pence halfpenny of ready-money, in paper; with slipper-bath; strong three-footed stool for writing on, the while: and a squalid Washerwoman for his sole household . . . that is his civic establishment in Medical-School Street; thither and not elsewhere has his road led him. . . . Hark, a rap again! A musical woman's voice, refusing to be rejected: it is the Citoyenne who would do France a service. Marat, recognizing from within, cries, Admit her. Charlotte Corday is admitted."

The young heroine—for republican leaders are fair game, and their assassins are necessarily heroines and their voices "musical"—offered to give him some necessary information about the counter-revolution at Caen, and as he was occupied in making a note of her facts, she stabbed him with a large sheath knife (1792). . . .

Such was the quality of most of the leaders of the Jacobin party. They were men of no property—untethered men. They were more dissociated and more elemental, therefore, than any other party—and they were ready to push the ideas of freedom and equality to a logical extremity. Their standards of pat-

riot virtue were high and harsh. There was something inhuman even in their humanitarian zeal. They saw without humour the disposition of the moderates to ease things down, to keep the common folk just a little needy and respectful, and royalty (and men of substance) just a little respected. They were blinded by the formulæ of Rousseauism to the historical truth that man is by nature oppressor and oppressed, and that it is only slowly by law, education, and the spirit of love in the world that men can be made happy and free.

And while in America the formulæ of eighteenth-century democracy were on the whole stimulating and helpful because it was already a land of open-air practical equality so far as white men were concerned, in France these formulæ made a very heady and dangerous mixture for the town populations, because considerable parts of the towns of France were slums full of dispossessed, demoralized, degraded, and bitter-spirited people. The Parisian crowd was in a particularly desperate and dangerous state, because the industries of Paris had been largely luxury industries, and much of her employment parasitic on the weaknesses and



Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

MARAT.

(From the portrait now in the Carnavalet Museum.)



vices of fashionable life. Now the fashionable world had gone over the frontier, travellers were restricted, business disordered, and the city full of unemployed and angry people.

But the royalists, instead of realizing the significance of these Jacobins with their dangerous integrity and their dangerous grip upon the imagination of the mob, had the conceit to think they could make tools of them. The time for the replacement of the National Assembly under the new-made constitution by the "Legislative Assembly" was drawing near; and when the Jacobins, with the idea of breaking

wife of her need of him. There stood another body ready at hand with which these royalists did not reckon, far better equipped than the court to step in and take the place of an ineffective Legislative Assembly, and that was the strongly Jacobin Commune of Paris installed at the Hôtel de Ville.

So far France had been at peace. None of her neighbours had attacked her, because she appeared to be weakening herself by her internal dissensions. It was Poland that suffered by the distraction of France. But there seemed no reason why they should not insult and threaten her, and prepare the way for a later partition at their convenience. At Pillnitz, in 1791, the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria met, and issued a declaration<sup>2</sup> that the restoration of order and monarchy in France was a matter of interest to all sovereigns. And an army of emigrés, French nobles and gentlemen, an army largely of officers, was allowed to accumulate close to the frontier.

It was France that declared war against Austria. The motives of those who supported this step were conflicting. Many republicans wanted it because they wished to see the kindred



Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

DAVID'S FAMOUS PAINTING OF "THE DEATH OF MARAT."

up the moderates, proposed to make the members of the National Assembly ineligible for the Legislative Assembly, the royalists supported them with great glee, and carried the proposal. They perceived that the Legislative Assembly, so clipped of all experience, must certainly be a politically incompetent body. They would "extract good from the excess of evil,"<sup>1</sup> and presently France would fall back helpless into the hands of her legitimate masters. So they thought. And the royalists did more than this. They backed the election of a Jacobin as Mayor of Paris. It was about as clever as if a man brought home a hungry tiger to convince his

people of Belgium liberated from the Austrian yoke. Many royalists wanted it because they saw in war a possibility of restoring the prestige of the crown. Marat opposed it bitterly in his paper *L'Ami du Peuple*, because he did not want to see republican enthusiasm

<sup>2</sup> The Declaration of Pillnitz was a diplomatic *démarche* that failed. Great Britain had definitely refused to intervene in favour of the French monarchy, and Austrian statesmanship proposed to save the collective face of European monarchy by a sounding announcement of sympathy with the French Bourbons, followed by a proviso that unanimity should be secured before intervention was attempted. French opinion (and most historians) concentrated on the announcement and overlooked the proviso.—P. G.

<sup>1</sup> Wiriath.



turned into war fever. His instinct warned him of Napoleon. On April 20th, 1792, the king came down to the Assembly and proposed war amidst great applause.

The war began disastrously. Three French armies entered Belgium, two were badly beaten, and the third, under Lafayette, retreated. Then Prussia declared war in support of Austria, and the allied forces, under the Duke of Brunswick, prepared to invade France. The duke issued one of the most foolish proclamations in history; he was, he said, invading France to restore the royal authority. Any further indignity shown the king he threatened to visit upon the Assembly and Paris with "military execution." This was surely enough to make the most royalist Frenchman a republican—at least for the duration of the war.

The new phase of revolution, the Jacobin revolution, was the direct outcome of this proclamation. It made the Legislative Assembly, in which orderly republicans (Girondins) and royalists prevailed, it made the government which had put down that republican meeting in the Champ de Mars and hunted Marat into the sewers, impossible. The insurgents gathered at the Hôtel de Ville, and on the tenth of August the Commune launched an attack on the palace of the Tuileries.

The king behaved with a clumsy stupidity, and with that disregard for others which is the prerogative of kings. He had with him a Swiss guard of nearly a thousand men as well as National Guards of uncertain loyalty. He held out vaguely until firing began, and then he went off to the adjacent Assembly to place himself and his family under its protection, leaving his Swiss fighting. No doubt he hoped to antagonize Assembly and Commune, but the Assembly had none of the fighting spirit of the Hôtel de Ville. The royal refugees were placed in a box reserved for journalists (out of which a small room opened), and there they remained for sixteen hours while the Assembly debated their fate. Outside there were the sounds of a considerable battle; every now and then a window would break. The unfortunate Swiss were fighting with their backs to the wall because there was now nothing else for them to do. . . .

The Assembly had no stomach to back the

government's action of July in the Champ de Mars. The fierce vigour of the Commune dominated it. The king found no comfort whatever in the Assembly. It scolded him and discussed his "suspension." The Swiss fought until they received a message from the king to desist, and then—the crowd being savagely angry at the needless bloodshed and out of control—they were for the most part massacred.

The long and tedious attempt to "Merovingianize" Louis, to make an honest crowned republican out of a dull and inadaptably absolute monarch, was now drawing to its tragic close. The Commune of Paris was practically in control of France. The Legislative Assembly—which had apparently undergone a change of heart—decreed that the king was suspended from his office, confined him in the Temple, replaced him by an executive commission, and summoned a National Convention to frame a new constitution.

The tension of patriotic and republican France was now becoming intolerable. Such armies as she had were rolling back helplessly towards Paris. Longwy had fallen, the great fortress of Verdun followed, and nothing seemed likely to stop the march of the allies upon the capital. The sense of royalist treachery rose to panic cruelty. At any rate the royalists had to be silenced and stilled and scared out of sight. The Commune set itself to hunt out every royalist that could be found, until the prisons of Paris were full. Danton incited the crowd against the prisoners, Marat saw the danger of a massacre. Before it was too late Marat tried to secure the establishment of emergency tribunals to filter the innocent from the guilty in this miscellaneous collection of schemers, suspects, and harmless gentlefolk. He was disregarded, and early in September the inevitable massacre occurred.

Suddenly, first at one prison and then at others, bands of insurgents took possession. A sort of rough court was constituted, and outside gathered a wild mob armed with sabres, pikes, and axes. One by one the prisoners, men and women alike, were led out from their cells, questioned briefly, pardoned with the cry of "Vive la Nation," or thrust out to the mob at the gates. There the crowd jostled and fought



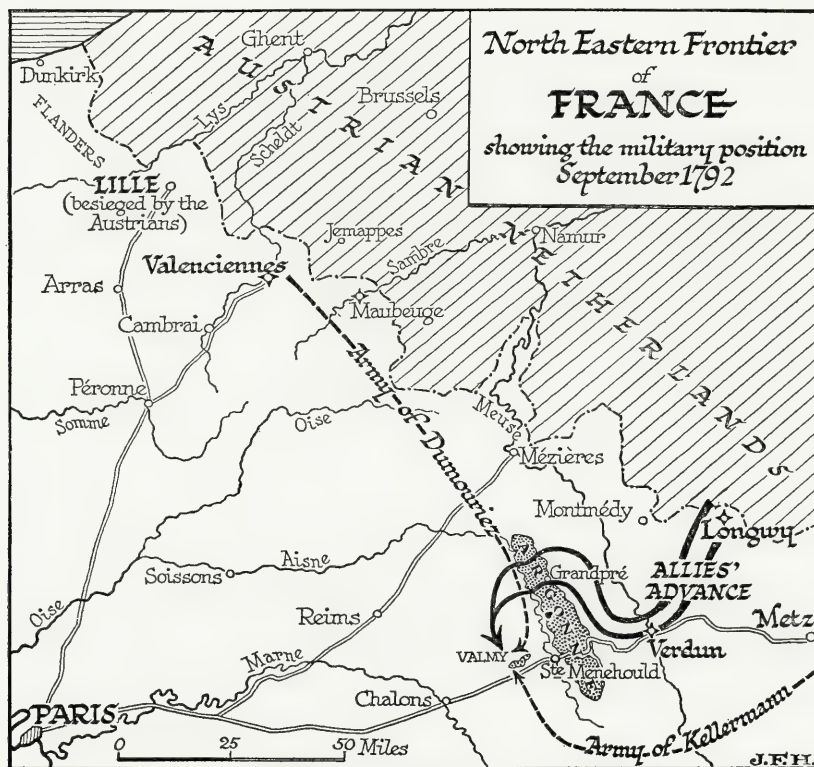
to get a slash or thrust at a victim. The condemned were stabbed, hacked, and beaten to death, their heads hewn off, stuck on pikes, and carried about the town, their torn bodies thrust aside. Among others, the Princesse de Lamballe, whom the king and queen had left behind in the Tuileries, perished. Her head was carried on a pike to the Temple for the queen to see.

In the queen's cell were two National Guards. One would have had her look out and see this grisly sight. The other, in pity, would not let her do so.

to fall back towards the Rhine. This battle at Valmy—it was little more than a cannonade—was one of the decisive battles in the world's history. The Revolution was saved.

The National Convention met on September 21st, 1792, and immediately proclaimed a republic. The trial and execution of the king followed with a sort of logical necessity upon these things. He died rather as a symbol than as a man. There was nothing else to be done with him; poor man, he cumbered the earth.

France could not let him go to hearten the emigrants, could not keep him harmless at home; his existence threatened her. Marat had urged this trial relentlessly, yet with that acid clearness of his he would not have the king charged with any offence committed before he signed the constitution, because before then he was a real monarch, super-legal, and so incapable of being illegal. Nor would Marat permit attacks upon the king's counsel. . . . Throughout Marat played a bitter and yet often a just part; he was a great man, a fine intelligence, in a skin of fire; wrung with that organic hate in the blood that is not



Even as this red tragedy was going on in Paris, the French general Dumouriez, who had rushed an army from Flanders into the forests of the Argonne, was holding up the advance of the allies beyond Verdun. On September 20th occurred a battle, mainly an artillery encounter, at Valmy. A not very resolute Prussian advance was checked,<sup>1</sup> the French infantry stood firm, their artillery was better than the allied artillery. For ten days after this repulse the Duke of Brunswick hesitated, and then he began

<sup>1</sup> The sour grapes of Champagne spread dysentery in the Prussian army.—P. G.

a product of the mind but of the body.

Louis was beheaded in January, 1793. He was guillotined—for since the previous August the guillotine had been in use as the official instrument in French executions.

Danton, in his leonine rôle, was very fine upon this occasion. "The kings of Europe would challenge us," he roared. "We throw them the head of a king!"

## § II

And now followed a strange phase in the history of the French people. There arose a great



flame of enthusiasm for France and the Republic. There was to be an end to compro-

**The Jacobin Republic, 1792-94.** mise at home and abroad; at home royalists and every form of disloyal-

ty were to be stamped out; abroad France was to be the protector and helper of all revolutionaries. All Europe, all the world, was to become republican. The youth of France poured into the Republican armies; a new and wonderful song spread through the land, a song that still warms the blood like wine, the *Marseillaise*. Before that chant and the leaping columns of French bayonets and their enthusiastically served guns the foreign armies rolled back; before the end of 1792 the French armies had gone far beyond the utmost achievements of Louis XIV; everywhere they stood on foreign soil. They

were in Brussels, they had overrun Savoy, they had raided to Mayence; they had seized the Scheldt from Holland. Then the French Government did an unwise thing. It had been exasperated by the expulsion of its representative from England upon the execution of Louis, and it declared war against England. It was an unwise thing to do, because the revolution which had given France a new enthusiastic infantry and a brilliant artillery, released from its aristocratic officers and many cramping traditions,<sup>1</sup> had destroyed the discipline of its navy, and the English were supreme upon the sea. And this provocation united all England against France, whereas there had been at first a very considerable liberal movement in Great Britain in sympathy with the revolution.

<sup>1</sup> The intelligence of the French army of the Revolution was largely due to a period of intelligent military thinking and writing which set in among French soldiers after the defeats of the army of Louis XV in the Seven Years' War. Napoleon himself was full of traces of this inspiration.—P. G.

It robbed France of her one prospective ally.<sup>2</sup>

Of the fight that France made in the next few years against a European coalition we cannot tell in any detail. She drove the Austrians for ever out of Belgium, and made Holland a republic. The Dutch fleet, frozen in the Texel, surrendered to a handful of cavalry without firing its guns. For some time the French thrust towards Italy was hung up, and it was only in 1796 that a new general, Napoleon Bonaparte, led the ragged and hungry republican armies in triumph across Piedmont to Mantua and Verona. An *Outline of History* cannot map out campaigns; but of the new quality that had come into war, it is bound to take note. The old professional armies had fought for the fighting, as slack as workers



Photo: Rischgitz Collection.

MARIE ANTOINETTE IN PRISON.

paid by the hour; these wonderful new armies fought hungry and thirsty, for victory. Their enemies called them the "New French." Says C. F. Atkinson,<sup>3</sup> "What astonished the Allies most of all was the number and the velocity of the Republicans. These improvised armies had in fact nothing to delay them. Tents were unprocurable for want of money, untransportable for want of the enormous number of wagons that would have been required, and also unnecessary, for the discomfort that would have caused wholesale desertion in professional armies was cheerfully borne by the men of 1793-94. Supplies for armies of then unheard-of size could not be carried in convoys, and the French soon became

<sup>2</sup> I cannot agree that England was ever, at any moment, "a prospective ally" of France. There was a deep divergence of interests; and it is impossible to think of Pitt and the Whig nobles being in any way the allies of the France of 1793.—E. B.

<sup>3</sup> In his article, "French Revolutionary Wars," in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.



familiar with "living on the country." Thus 1793 saw the birth of the modern system of war—rapidity of movement, full development of national strength, bivouacs, requisitions and force as against cautious manœuvring, small professional armies, tents and full rations, and chicane. The first represented the decision-compelling spirit, the second the spirit of risking little to gain a little. . . ."

And while these ragged hosts of enthusiasts were chanting the Marseillaise and fighting for *la France*, manifestly never quite clear in their minds whether they were looting or liberating the countries into which they poured, the republican enthusiasm in Paris was spending itself in a far less glorious fashion. Marat, the one man of commanding intelligence among the Jacobins, was now frantic with an incurable disease, and presently he was murdered; Danton was a series of patriotic thunderstorms; the steadfast fanaticism of Robespierre dominated the situation. This man is difficult to judge; he was a man of poor physique, naturally timid, and a prig. But he had that most necessary gift for power, faith. He believed not in a god familiar to men, but in a certain Supreme Being, and that Rousseau was his prophet. He set himself to save the Republic as he conceived it, and he imagined it could be saved by no other man than he. So that to keep in power was to save the republic. The living spirit of the republic, it seemed, had sprung from a slaughter of royalists and the execution of the king. There were insurrections: one in the west, in the district of La Vendée, where the people rose against the conscription and against the dispossession of the orthodox clergy and were led by noblemen and priests; one in the south, where Lyons and Marseilles had risen and the royalists of Toulon had admitted an English and Spanish garrison. To which there seemed no more effectual reply than to go on killing royalists.

Nothing could have better pleased the fierce heart of the Paris slums. The Revolutionary Tribunal went to work, and a steady slaughtering began.<sup>1</sup> The invention of the guillotine was opportune to this mood. The queen was

guillotined, most of Robespierre's antagonists were guillotined, atheists who argued that there was no Supreme Being were guillotined, Danton was guillotined because he thought there was too much guillotine; day by day, week by week, this infernal new machine chopped off heads and more heads and more. The reign of Robespierre lived, it seemed, on blood, and needed more and more, as an opium-taker needs more and more opium.

Danton was still Danton, leonine and exemplary upon the guillotine. "Danton," he said, "no weakness!"

And the grotesque thing about the story is that Robespierre was indubitably honest. He was far more honest than any of the group of men who succeeded him. He was inspired by a consuming passion for a new order of human life. So far as he could contrive it, the Committee of Public Safety, the emergency government of twelve which had now thrust aside the Convention, *constructed*. The scale on which it sought to construct was stupendous. All the intricate problems with which we still struggle to-day were met by swift and shallow solutions. Attempts were made to equalize property. "Opulence," said St. Just, "is infamous." The property of the rich was taxed or confiscated in order that it should be divided among the poor. Every man was to have a secure house, a living, a wife and children. The labourer was worthy of his hire, but not entitled to an advantage. There was an attempt to abolish *profit* altogether, the rude incentive of most human commerce since the beginning of society. Profit is the economic riddle that still puzzles us to-day. There were harsh laws against "profiteering" in France in 1793—England in 1919 found it necessary to make quite similar laws. And the Jacobin government not only replanned—in eloquent outline—the economic, but also the social system. Divorce was made as easy as marriage; the distinction of legitimate and illegitimate children was abolished. . . . A new calendar was devised, with new names for the months, a week of ten days, and the like—that has long since been swept away; but also the clumsy coinage and the tangled weights and measures of old France gave place to the simple and lucid decimal system that still endures. . . . There

<sup>1</sup> In the thirteen months before June, 1794, there were 1,220 executions; in the following seven weeks there were 1,376.—P. G.



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